

PC review

Which 486?

Don't buy a new PC
until you read this!

Over
25 games
reviewed!

Elite 2

Blast beyond the
final Frontier in our
EXCLUSIVE full
review!

Make it easy

- DOS 6 tips and tactics
- CD-ROM drives explained

WIN this Unica 486 PC!

Details inside

**TWO HIGH DENSITY
DISKS WITH THIS ISSUE**



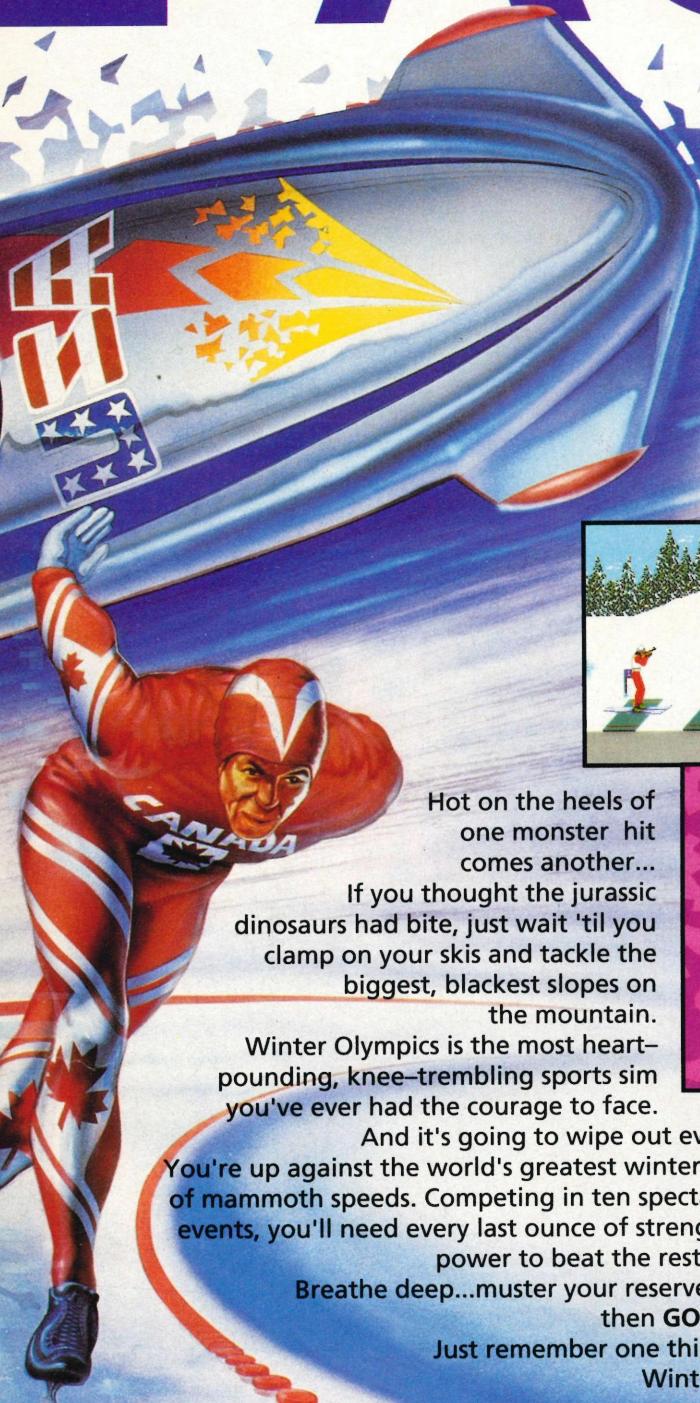
THE IC



winter
OLYMPICS

This Winter's hottest game.

WINTER OLYMPICS



Hot on the heels of one monster hit comes another...

If you thought the jurassic dinosaurs had bite, just wait 'til you clamp on your skis and tackle the biggest, blackest slopes on the mountain.

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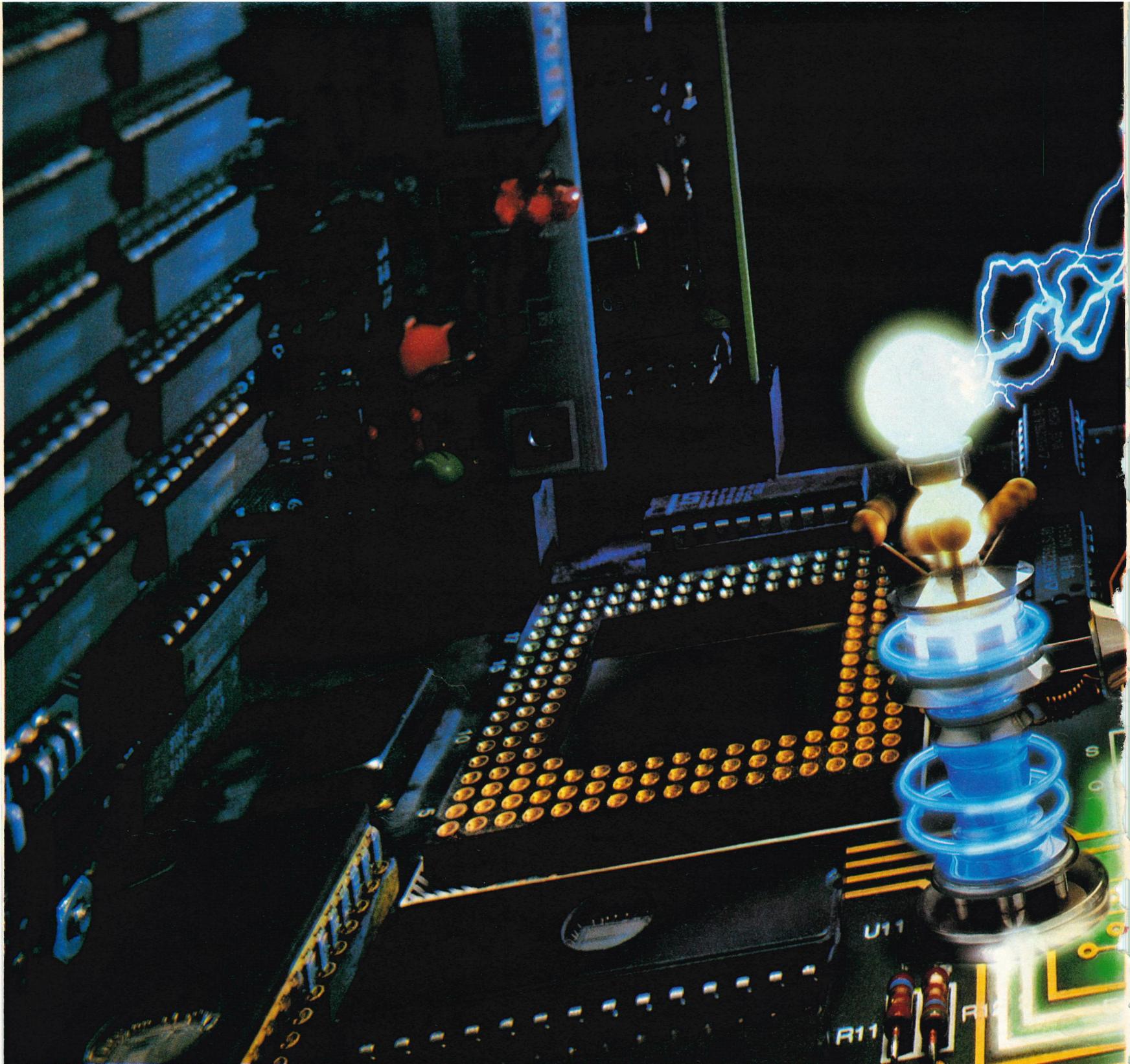
Winter Olympics. It's hot.

AVAILABLE ON:
SEGA MEGA DRIVE,
MASTER SYSTEM, GAME GEAR,
NINTENDO S.NES, AMIGA, PC
AND PC CD-ROM.



Screen shots from a selection of available formats (see above)

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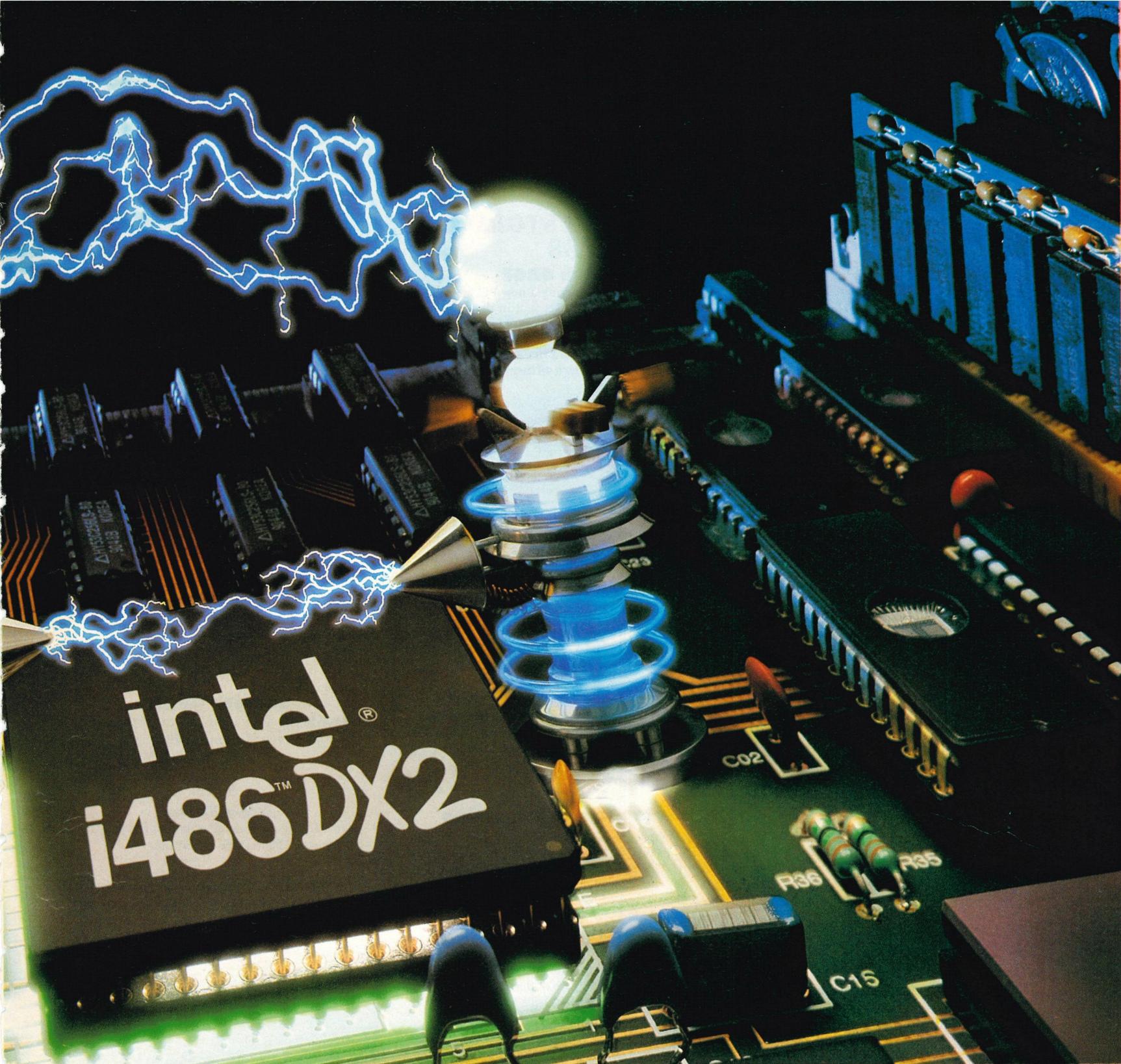


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DX32

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ISSUE 26

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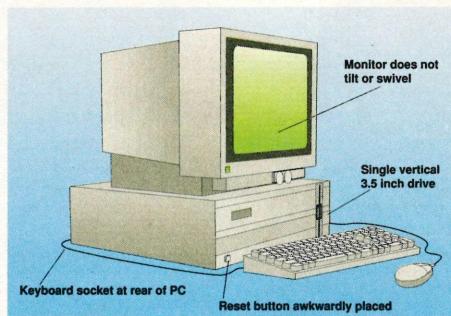
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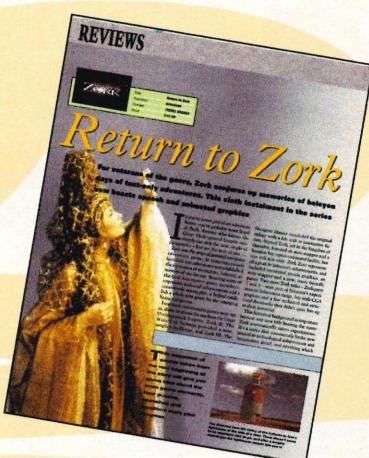
Hit Squad

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Kixx XL

Night Shift

Kixx XL



COVER DISKS



PAGE 8

CONTRIBUTORS



**CHRISTINA
ERSKINE**

PC Review's editor has been out to improve herself this month, researching the best of the CD encyclopaedias on the market, and then relaxing to the strains of Digital Love (not quite as exciting as it sounds — see page 37).



**GORDON
HOUGHTON**

As a long-standing fan of Infocom and Zork, Gordon Houghton was curious to see how Activision's 1990s treatment of the venerable series would turn out. Find out how he got on on page 82.



SIMON SHAW

Our strategy expert has been in the wars this month with Patriot, Kingmaker, The Blue and the Gray and V for Victory 4. Showing no signs of combat fatigue, Simon begins the war game reviews on page 98.

28 COMPETITION
Win a Unica 486 PC
with built-in CD-ROM
drive

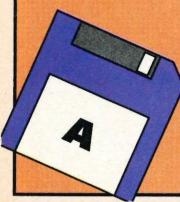
COVER DISKS

With TWO high density disks this month we've really packed them in. First up is SnapGrafx, a drawing package that enables anyone to create brilliant graphics. Global Domination is a world conquest sim, and there's platform antics with Magic Boy. Add to that a pair of Windows utilities designed to make your life a lot easier, and then finish off with a rolling demo of the most eagerly anticipated game of the decade, Frontier: Elite II.

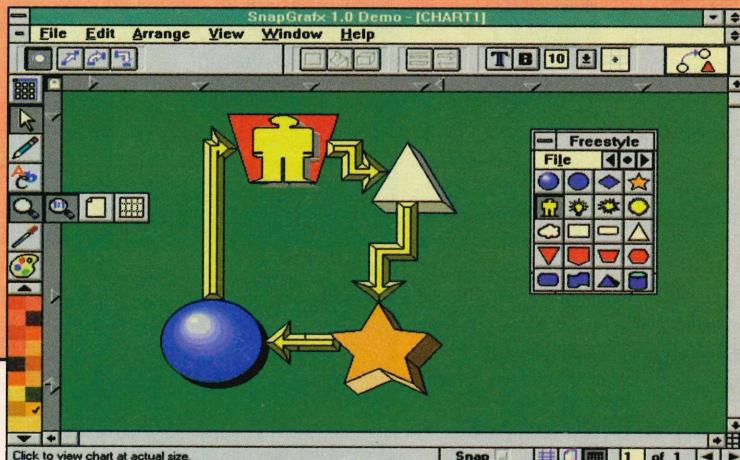


SNAPGRAFX 1.0

3.5" disks
only



On disk A



Click to view chart at actual size.



What is Snapgraft?

Snapgraft is a brand new Windows drawing package from Micrograft. It is designed to enable everyone to create eye-catching graphics as easily, quickly and painlessly as possible for a variety of uses. To do this it uses a vast array of ready-made images and clip-art, a set of templates for everything from freehand drawing to Venn Diagrams, and dazzling special effects.

This exclusive demo version has all the features of the full £200 program, bar the ability

to save files or cut and paste to another program, and it will only print the first page of your file.

How to install Snapgraft

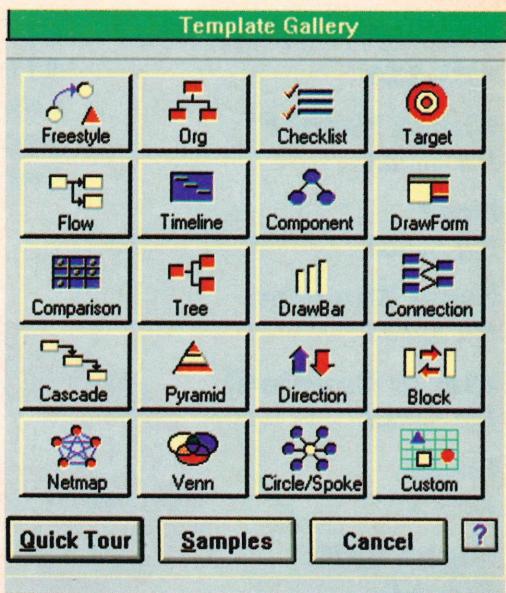
First of all, make sure you've installed Snapgraft to your hard disk. Then load Windows. Choose

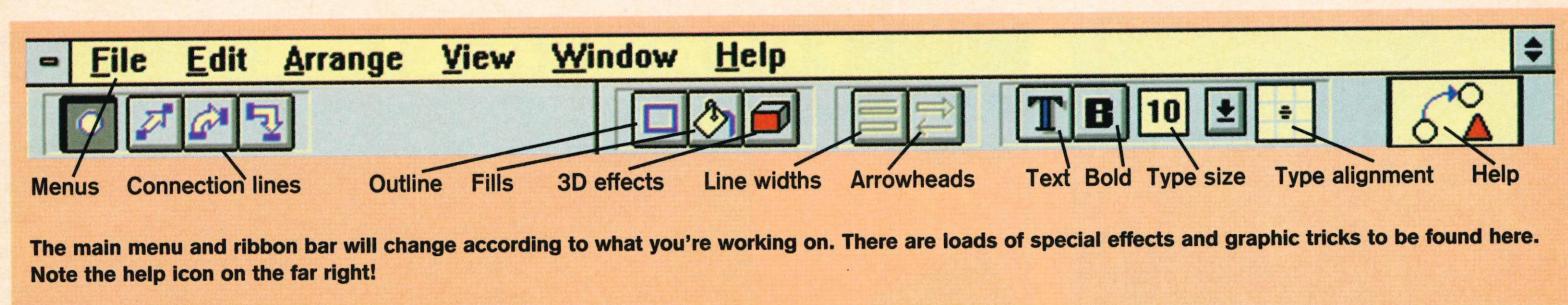
File, Run

from the Windows Program Manager, and select the file in the Snap directory called Install.exe. Then hit Enter. This will launch the special Micrograft installer, and it will prompt you all the way through the job from there. When

Snapgraft has been installed, an icon will be added to your Windows Program Manager called Snapdemo. Simply double-click on this to start the program.

The opening screen is where you choose what sort of template you want to work with. These will give you ready-made layouts and special tools for particular jobs – things that would be extremely difficult or time-consuming to do by hand.



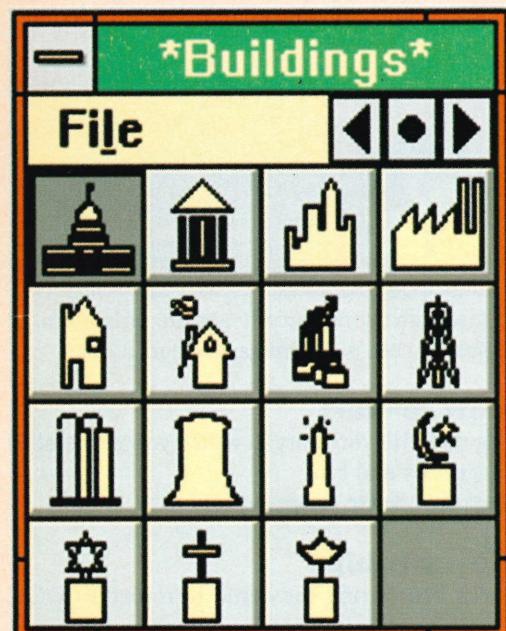


How to quit

Either Alt-F4, or File, Quit from the menu will get you out of Snapgrafx. Remember, you can't save the picture which you're working on, so make sure you print it first.

Hardware required

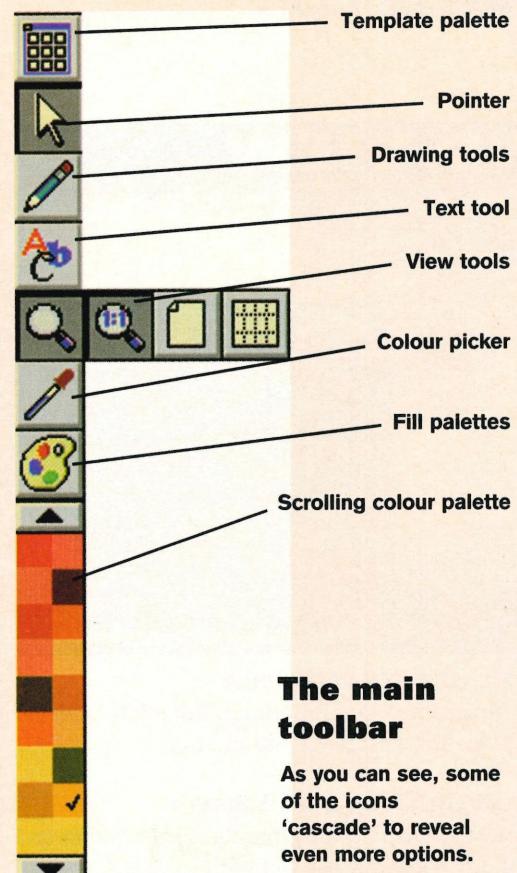
A 386 PC, 2Mb of RAM, DOS 5.0, Windows 3.1 and a mouse.



How to use the Snapgrafx demo

When you start a new picture (File, New) you'll be presented with a screen showing a variety of templates. You can choose one of these to suit the job you're doing, or choose the freestyle template if you want to start from scratch. After that it's up to you. Snapgrafx makes good use of the pictorial, icon-based approach so it really should be very easy to get to grips with it and start experimenting.

To make things even easier, there is a quick tour feature which will take you through all the major features, and the program also comes with standard Windows help on the menu bar, so you can get info on what all the tools, menus and options are for at the click of a mouse. You can always view this or print it out from pretty much any standard word processor if you want.



Click an object to select it or drag mouse to select a group of objects.

Scroll bars Hint line

Snap to grid on/off Grids on/off Page colour Palettes on/off Pages Scroll through

GLOBAL DOMINATION

3.5" disks only



On disk B

You've read the review on page 107, now try the game. Global Domination is a world conquest simulation in which you pit your wits against history's most famous leaders. The object is to expand your empire by conquering territories across the globe.

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you installed Global Domination and type
GLOBAL [Enter]

How to quit

From the game screen, click on the "i" icon, then select Exit.

Hardware required

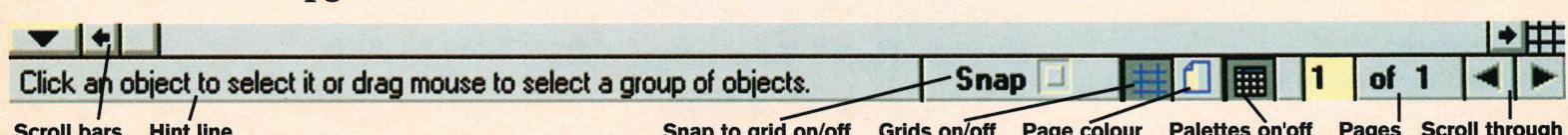
386 minimum, VGA, mouse and 600K base memory.

How to play

This demo places you in the thick of the action with most of the territories already under the control of you and your famous enemies. Your territories are red, territories in which a battle is being fought are orange and territories which are in a state of revolution are shown as purple.

To start, you must build your armies. First go

Installing your cover disk: details on page 14



COVER DISKS



to the logistics screen by clicking on the scales icon with your mouse. Six different sizes of armies are shown by the icons at the bottom of the screen. Click on the number beneath the icon to select the size of the army you wish to build and on the right to return to the main screen. Click on the world map to zoom in. Then click on the bullet icon to build an army, then place it on one of your own territories.

Armies can then be moved into neutral or enemy territories by clicking on the open hand icon, placing it over an army and then dragging into the territory you aim to conquer.

Territories which aren't occupied by an enemy army will fall to you straightaway, but if an army is already present, the territory will turn orange to show that a battle is going on. In this demo, conflicts are resolved by computer and the satellite option to control each battle is not available.

FRONTIER: ELITE 2

3.5" disks only

On disk B

A screenshot from the game Frontier: Elite 2. It shows a 3D perspective view of a space landscape with various celestial bodies, stars, and a large, metallic-looking starship in the foreground. The word "FRONTIER" is visible at the bottom of the screen.

If you've been holding your breath in anticipation of David Braben's five-years-in-the-making Frontier: Elite 2, then take a look at the review on page 64, load up our exclusive demo and see what all the fuss is about. This is a non-interactive demo, so just put your feet up and enjoy.

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you have installed Frontier and type

FRONTIER [Enter]

How to quit

The only way to quit this demo is to reboot your PC. Sorry, folks.

Hardware required

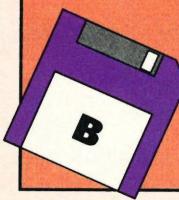
You'll need a 386 processor or better with VGA graphics.

Controls

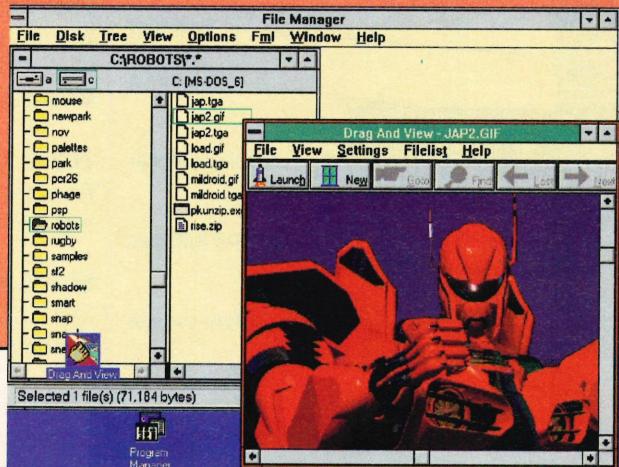
Since this is a rolling demo, all you have to do is run it and watch.

DRAG AND VIEW

3.5" disks only



On disk B



This Windows utility enables you to view image files with the minimum of fuss and bother.

How to start

Once you've installed Drag and View on to your hard drive, go into the Windows File Manager and select File, then Run Dvsetup. This will create an icon. Click on the icon to enable Drag and View.

How to quit

Double click on the minus icon in the top left of the Drag and View window to close it.

Hardware required

You need a 386 minimum running MS-DOS 5.0 or higher, Windows, and mouse.

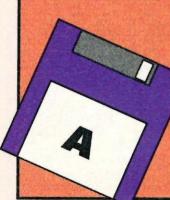
Using Drag and View

Select Launch in the Drag and View window and then choose the file you wish to view.

Problems with your cover disk? See page 14 for help and advice.

MAGIC BOY

3.5" and 5.25" disks



If you want some arcade action, this demo of Empire's cute platform game offers a taste.

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you've installed Magic Boy and type

MAGICBOY [Enter]

How to quit

Press F10 during the demo to return to DOS.

Hardware required

You'll need a 386 or better, plus VGA.

How to play

Use the cursor keys to move and Space to fire. Shoot the monsters to stun them, then move over them to trap them in your sack.

AMERICA! YOU'RE NEXT.



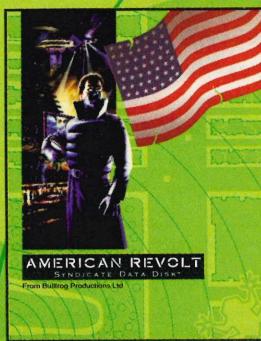
"Syndicate™ ...Incredibly violent, completely amoral and brilliant fun" PC Zone - 90%
"...Action, strategy, atmosphere: Syndicate has something to please everyone..." PC Review - 9/10



Now, from Alaska to Argentina the cities of the Americas' are out of control. As the leader of a controlling Syndicate you must do whatever is required to bring the troublesome populace back in line before your enemies and business rivals can gain a foothold in the sick and corrupted streets of an America gone wrong.

To assist you in the 21 all new missions the research and development boys have come up with a whole host of deliciously callous weapons and gadgets, all quite capable of aiding your agents in a touch of inner city depravation.

A cunning new clone shield lets



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you holographically disguise your agents as ordinary innocent civilians , allowing them to mingle among the nobodies before whipping out their Uzis and mowing down everyone in sight.

Or by merely activating a homing beacon you can call up air strikes that vaporize entire trouble zones of enemies you really can't be bothered to tackle face to face , after all this is America.

And there's network support for up to 8 players, with specially designed multi-player missions, so you and your friends/enemies can all try to out do each other in the nicest possible way.

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AMERICAN REVOLT™ SYNDICATE™ DATA DISK

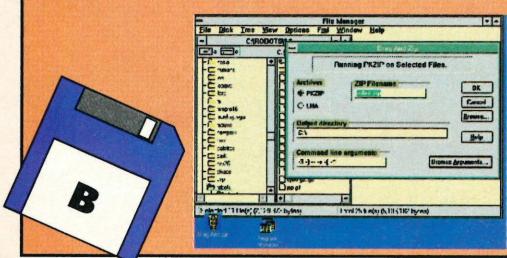
To buy your copy of this game, visit your local retailer. In case of any difficulty, contact EA Direct on: 0753 549442.



COVER DISKS

DRAG AND ZIP

3.5" and 5.25" disks



This is a Windows utility which compresses one or more files easily using Pkzip or LHA.

How to start

Once you've installed Drag and Zip onto your hard drive, go into the Windows File Manager and select File, then Run Dzsetup. This will create an icon. Click on the icon to enable Drag and Zip.

How to quit

Click on the Drag and Zip icon and then select

the option required to close.

Hardware required

A 386 minimum running MS-DOS 5.0 or higher, Windows, and mouse, Pkzip or LHA compression utilities.

Using Drag and Zip

Once the Drag and Zip icon appears in File Manager, drag the files on to the icon and they will automatically be compressed. You can drag a single file, groups of files or a whole directory and they will all be compressed into an archive file.

DOUBLE FIX

Anyone who has used the DoubleSpace disk compression utility that comes with MS-DOS 6.0 will know it's very useful for making the most of your hard disk. However, many games won't run with it and have to be installed on the uncompressed part of the hard drive instead. Even if you're running games or applications from your uncompressed drive, DoubleSpace

still eats into your base memory. Double Fix disables DoubleSpace and frees up extra RAM.

WARNING: DO NOT USE DOUBLEFIX IF YOU ARE IN ANY DOUBT ABOUT HOW TO USE IT CORRECTLY. PC REVIEW AND ROD HYDE WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY DAMAGE CAUSED BY MISUSE OF THIS UTILITY.

How to use DoubleFix

Install Dbl.bat in the root directory of your host drive (usually H:\). Then read the instructions thoroughly by typing

Type READ.ME

To boot without DoubleSpace type

DBL OFF [Enter]

and then reboot.

To re-enable DoubleSpace type

DBL ON

and then reboot.

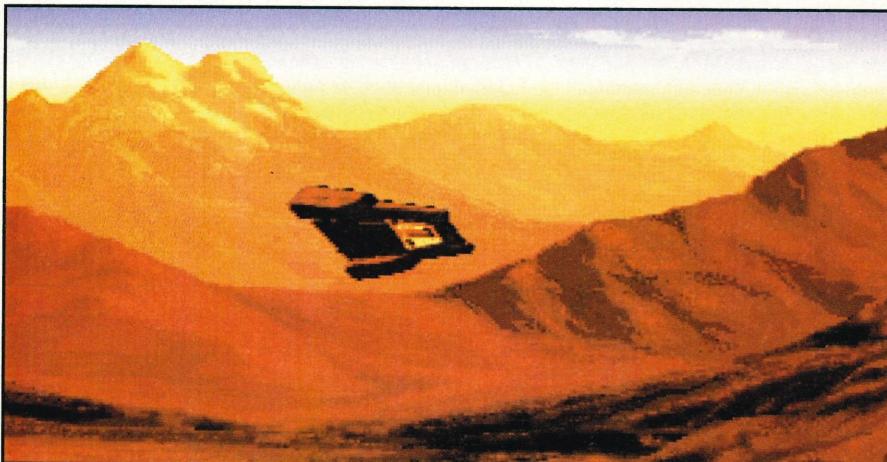
Hardware required

Any PC running MS-DOS 6.0

Exclusive free demo offer

With games getting bigger and more impressive all the time, it's not always possible to fit them on to our cover disks. This month we have no less than four demos to give away, so send off the coupon along with a suitable SAE and you could receive the demo of your choice.

Inca II (Coktel Vision)



For the very first time we're offering you the chance to try out an exclusive demo on CD-ROM. Inca II is the sequel to Coktel Vision's Inca, a game which combined the traditions and mythology of the extinct

Inca culture with futuristic space flight and exhilarating combat. One of the most original and interesting games to hit the PC in 1992, Inca had a lot of points in its favour. Inca II looks even better, with all the best elements of the original and several improvements as well.

If you've been intrigued by the preview on page 32, this demo gives you the chance to see this marvellous game in action. The state of the art graphics and cinematic sound just have to be experienced first-hand to be properly appreciated. Believe us, this game is going to blow your mind.

Coktel Vision has 200 CD-ROM demos to give away, so send off the coupon along with a stamped addressed envelope and you're in with a chance.

Send this coupon and an SAE to: Inca II demo Offer, Sierra On-Line, Unit 2, Technology Centre, Station Road, Theale, Reading, Berkshire RG7 4AA.

Minimum requirements are a 386, CD-ROM drive and VGA

Name:

Address:

Tick this box if you don't wish to receive additional mail-outs

A STATE OF EMPLOY TO DESTROY

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91% Amiga Computer

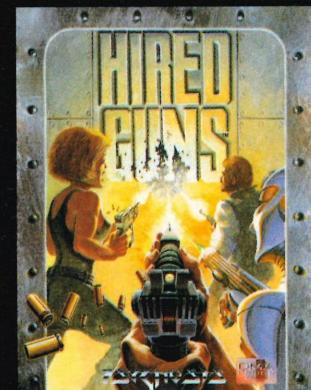
91% The One 90% Amiga Action

WIN one of 20 advanced Gravis 2-way Amiga adapters. Just answer this question: How many players can play Hired Guns at once? a)20 b)4 c)2 Send your answer on a postcard, stating your name, address, age, type of computer and the name of this magazine. To: Hired Guns take no prisoners, Psygnosis Competitions, Dept.1770, Winterhill, Milton Keynes MK6 1HQ, UK.

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All calls cost 36p per min. cheap rate, 48p at all other times. Please ask the bill payers permission before using the phone. For a full set of rules send SAE to Psygnosis, South Harrington Building, Sefton Street, Liverpool L3 4BQ. Entries must be received before 31st December 1993.

FROM THE UNITED STATES OF PSYGNOSIS

How to use the cover disks

1. Put the cover disk in any disk drive and log on to that drive. For instance, if you have put it into drive A: type:

A: [Enter]

2. Now type

PCR [Enter]

to load the installation program.

3. There may be a menu asking you to select which language you wish to have the installation messages displayed in. To make your selection use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then click the left mouse button or press the Enter key.

4. A list of programs on the disk will now be displayed. To select the program you wish to install or run, use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then press and release the left mouse button or the Enter key.

5. If the program is of a type that runs directly it will do so now before returning you to the menu and step 4.

6. If the program has to be installed to another disk you will now have to tell the program where you want it to be installed.

7. The program will suggest a drive and directory to install the program to. If you are happy with the suggested location, press the enter key and installation will begin.

8. If you would like the program to be installed to a different drive and/or directory, backspace over the suggested pathname and enter another one. You cannot install the program on the cover disk itself.

9. If there is insufficient space on the disk you have specified, or if the directory you have specified cannot be created, the program will inform you of this and give you the opportunity to enter an alternative location.

10. All being well, the program should now be decompressed and installed at the specified location. You will see a series of messages on the screen while this is in the process of happening.

11. Once the program has been successfully installed you will see a message reminding you of where it was installed to and telling you which command starts the program. Press a key to return to step 4.

12. When you have installed or played all the programs that you wish to, press Esc to exit to DOS.

Important note for users without a hard disk.

1. Providing that the programs will fit, you can install them on to another floppy disk.

2. If you have a twin drive system you should leave the cover disk in one drive and install each program to a blank formatted disk in the second drive.

3. If you only have a single disk drive, you can install the programs to a blank, formatted disk using the same drive. You should specify drive B: when asked for an install path. DOS will now prompt you when you need to swap the disks. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive B: you should insert the blank disk. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive A: you should put the cover disk back in. You will have to swap disks several times during the installation process.

4. On some occasions you may be asked to insert a system disk. In this case you should insert a system disk instead of the cover disk, and then swap them again when prompted to do so.

Important note for users with mono, LCD or plasma displays

1. The installation program should automatically detect whether you have a mono or colour display and run in the appropriate mode.

2. If you have a grey scale LCD or plasma display you may prefer to run the program in mono rather than colour. You can do this by starting the program with the command:

PCR M [Enter]

3. If you have a non-standard colour display which the program fails to detect you can force it to run in colour mode by starting it with the command:

PCR C [Enter]

Helpline

If you have difficulty in getting your disk to operate, please telephone our helpline number below before returning the disk.

Disk Helpline: (0685) 350505

The helpline operates between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm weekdays.

Please note

PC Review's cover disks are rigorously checked at each stage of production for all known viruses and duplicated under strict quality control.

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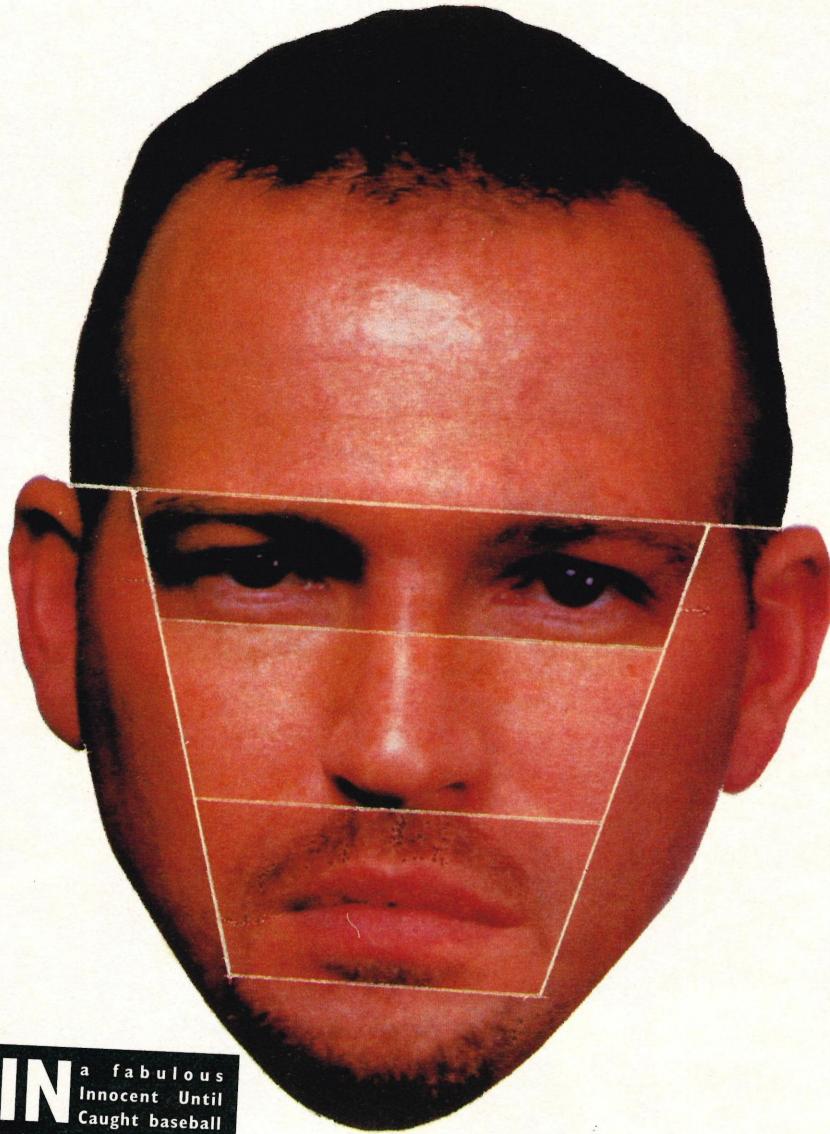
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A STATE OF EVASION

THIS MAN IS WANTED THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.



WIN a fabulous
Innocent Until Caught baseball
jacket. Just answer this simple
question: Who is Chasing Jack T. Ladd?
a) MIS b) the IRDS c) the FBI
Send your answer on a postcard,
stating your name, address, age, type
of computer and the name of this
magazine. To: Who is Jack T. Ladd?
Psygnosis Competitions, Dept. I770,
Winterhill, Milton Keynes MK6 1HQ, UK.



UNITED STATES OF PSYGNOSIS ANNOUNCEMENT.

Playing Innocent Until Caught is thought to be addictive. 10Mb of data, superb gameplay, realistic 8-way movement and features including SmuttiText™, Censo-Round™ and CyniPlay™, are but a few of the ingredients thought to be included in an insidious attempt

to lead the fine young people of our Galaxy off the straight and narrow, down the rocky road of debauchery.

We also warn that playing this game constitutes an attempt to assist one of the greatest villains of our time in avoiding lawful repayments of taxes. Anyone found abetting this criminal will be dealt with severely. If you have already encountered this man and are facing a dilemma call the Innocent Helpline.

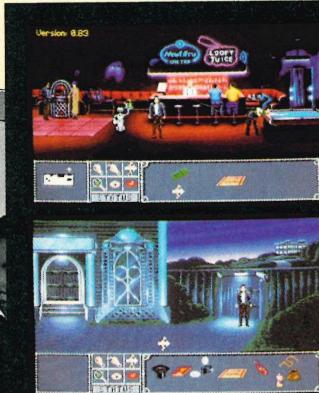
In an unprecedented move the Interstellar Revenue Decimation Service have appealed for public help in tracking one of the greatest debtors in history.

Known as Jack T. Ladd, he was presented yesterday with a tax bill reputedly totalling at least twice the gross national income of several major star systems, and given 28 days to pay. This was the last that the IRDS saw of him.

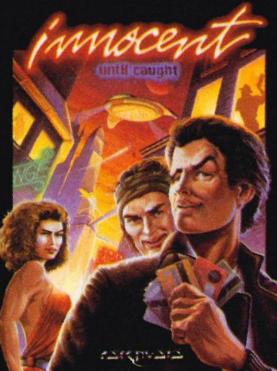
The photo-fit recreated here has been put together from descriptions supplied by various members of the IRDS, several bartenders, his landlord and fourteen women with intimate knowledge of him.

Known throughout the underworld as a professional thief, Jack T. Ladd has already been sighted on three planets, one Cloud City and at least four bars. It is believed that he is involved in various nefarious deals in a vain attempt to raise the money he owes. However a spokesman for the IRDS told us "He doesn't have a chance, he's only got four weeks and our patience is already running thin. We've got him by the XXXX's."

If you see this man do not approach him, he may be armed. We know he carries a fully loaded credit card wallet, and women especially are advised to avoid him at all costs. His charm is lethal.



AVAILABLE ON PC AND AMIGA.



HELPLINE 0891 101 276

All calls cost 36p per min. cheap rate, 48p at all other times. Please ask the bill payer permission before using the phone. For a full set of rules send SAE to Psygnosis, South Harrington Building, Sefton Street, Liverpool L3 4BQ. Entries must be received before 31st December 1993.

FROM THE UNITED STATES OF PSYGNOSIS

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YOU'RE ABOUT TO ENTER A MEDIEVAL WAR THAT TAKES NO PRISONERS!

You'll watch chess pieces saunter across the chequered battlefield to slay their opponents.

- Play against the computer or a friend.
- An opening library of 30,000 strategic moves.
- 10 levels of play - suitable for 12 year olds and upwards.
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- Witness brutal executions in breathtaking animation.



J.R.R. Tolkien's

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Welcome to the enchanted but dangerous land of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth.

You are Frodo Baggins, leader of a benevolent band of hobbits, dwarves, elves and a wizard, on a mission to destroy the One Ring that has the power to end your world.

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- ♦ Full stereo CD soundtrack.
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- ♦ Automap feature to plot your progress.



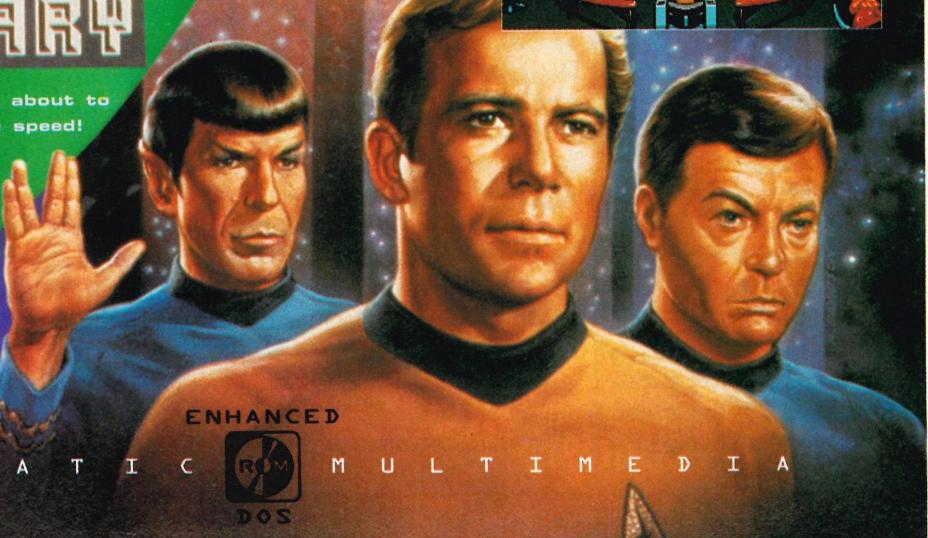
WEAPONS WISELY

STAR TREK

25TH ANNIVERSARY

Strap yourself securely into your seat, because you're about to navigate through the ultimate space adventure at warp speed! You'll scan and survey bizarre new worlds. Then lead your landing party on a heart-pounding mission where you'll discover alien races and artefacts... all faithfully authentic to the Star Trek TV series.

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ENHANCED



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NEWS

New Psion sounds off

As an extension of its popular Series 3 range of hand-held computers, Psion has launched the Series 3A. Combining a screen four times as large with three times the software in the same pocket-sized case, the Psion Series 3A personal information manager also introduces voice and sound capabilities.

The 3A incorporates a microphone, a loudspeaker and features a built-in application that provides a record and playback facility for making 'voice jottings' and recording sounds to be used as alarms.

"The Series 3A heralds the beginning of real voice interface development," says David Potter, the chairman of Psion, "the applications for sound and voice are innumerable." Psion has long been interested in the potential of voice recognition on hand-held computers.

The Psion Series 3A is priced at £269.95 for the 256K model and £329.95 for the 512K model. Contact Psion on (071) 262 5580 for further details.



Take the graphics tablets

CalComp, one of the computer world's leading graphics specialists has launched DrawingSlate, a thin, low-cost graphics tablet for DOS and Windows. The DrawingSlate is aimed at users who require a more accurate pointing and tracing device, and is suitable for design, DTP, and drawing applications.

Less than 3mm thick, the DrawingSlate only weighs in at under 400g and is supplied with a cordless pressure sensitive pen as standard. The tablet supports resolutions up to 1,270 lines per inch and claims an accuracy of 0.01 inch (0.25mm).

DrawingSlate connects to all IBM compatible PCs and is priced at £275 for the A5 size. Other sizes are available, and all inquiries should be directed to CalComp on (0734) 344012.

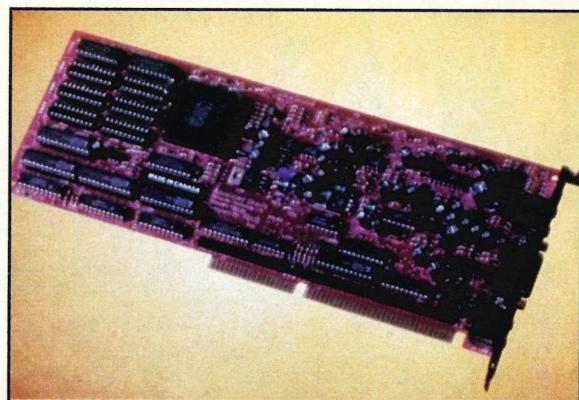
Sound Blaster gets more creative

Creative Technology recently announced two new versions of its Sound Blaster 16 audio card series. The Sound Blaster MultiCD has all the features of the standard SB16, but includes three built-in CD-ROM interfaces, while the Sound Blaster SCSI-2 has an interface that allows multiple SCSI devices to be accessed via the one controller. Both packages are also bundled with Creative's Windows speech recognition software, VoiceAssist, and WaveBlaster, the general MIDI compatible sampled wave synthesis daughter board. Both the cards are also available with Advanced Signal Processing for an extra £40, or the standard card can be upgraded to include this facility.

In addition, Creative Technology has also launched QSound Virtual Audio into its 16-bit sound card range. QSound simulates a 'surround sound' experience using only two speakers and will be packaged with the Advanced Signal Processing versions of the MultiCD and SCSI-2 sound cards. QSound has been developed by a Canadian company, Archer Communications, and has been used by recording artists such as Madonna, Sting and Paula Abdul.

The MultiCD Sound Blaster retails at £189 and the SCSI-2 at £219. For the ASP versions, the MultiCD and SCSI-2 sell at £229 and £259 respectively.

For more information, contact Creative Technology on (0743) 248590.



US Gold goes public

US Gold became the first computer games publisher to launch on to the Stock Exchange last month when shares in the holding company Centregold began trading at 167p on October 28. The Centregold group of companies, capitalised at £50.3 million, comprises US Gold, distributors Centresoft, IBD and PDQ, merchandising operation ISM and Electric Dreams, the store within Harrods.

The group plans to use the money raised to strengthen and expand its activities in interactive entertainment, particularly in the console market, since US Gold is to start purchasing its own cartridges rather than ordering them through Sega Europe. This will require a hefty outlay, especially for carts such as the forthcoming Winter Olympics game. The extra income will also fund development in CD-ROM titles and products for the forthcoming 3DO format.

US Gold was founded by Geoff and Anne Brown in 1984. After Geoff had found it difficult to buy games

for his Atari 800 he began importing them from the US himself, and US Gold was born. It signed up a number of prestigious US publishers (such as Access, MicroProse, SSI, Epyx, and Lucasfilm), and more recently some in Europe as licensors and while some, such as MicroProse, have since opened their own European offices, many have stayed with USG.



HMV opens Level One



The largest computer games store in the world opened last month at HMV in Oxford Street, London. Level One covers 6,000 square feet

and has space to stock 5,000 games, covering all computer and console formats, with a comprehensive range of PC titles. By the

end of the year, HMV plans to have games departments in 40 of its UK stores — nearly half the HMV chain.

Turn your 386SX into a 486

Upgrade Solutions has announced an upgrade for 386SX machines that effectively doubles processor performance.

Based on the Texas Instruments 486SLC CPU, the Rev To 486 is compatible with most 386SX based computers and can be easily

installed in a few minutes by simply snapping the 3cm square module over the top of the existing 386SX processor chip.

The Rev To 486 is available from Upgrade Solutions at a cost of £199 and for more information call them on (0734) 810020.

IN BRIEF...

- The leading route planner program, AutoRoute, has just been upgraded again. The latest release, AutoRoute Express v3.0, includes new map information, such as details of the whereabouts of London police cameras! The upgrade also calculates fuel consumption for each journey and enables you to program trips to start specifically from your house or office. Call NextBase on (0344) 873445 for more details.

- A £179 Mitsumi CD-ROM drive with a 350ms access time is among many new products in the new Misco Computer Supplies catalogue. Misco can be contacted directly on (0933) 400000 for more information.

- Logic 3 has announced the arrival of the Quattro and the smaller Pinto arcade style joysticks retailing at £12.99. But that's not all, because Logic 3 have also released the Delta Ray Joystick featuring a 'comfort grip' handle, five fire buttons and an extra long connector cable. For more information, contact Spectravideo on (081) 902 2211.

UFO lands on PCs

Guildsoft has released UFO, a Windows-based package which explores the phenomenon of unidentified flying objects. It contains an extensive database of over 500 documented sightings, including photographic evidence. Specific information can be found by event, date or map location. A CD-ROM version is also available, and includes data on 1,200 sightings plus photographs, full-motion video and audio.

UFO requires a PC with 2Mb RAM, Windows 3.1 or higher, Hard Disk and a Microsoft compatible mouse. The floppy version retails at £41.07 and the CD-ROM will be priced at £52.82. For additional information call Guildsoft on (0752) 606200.

YOU ASKED FOR IT!

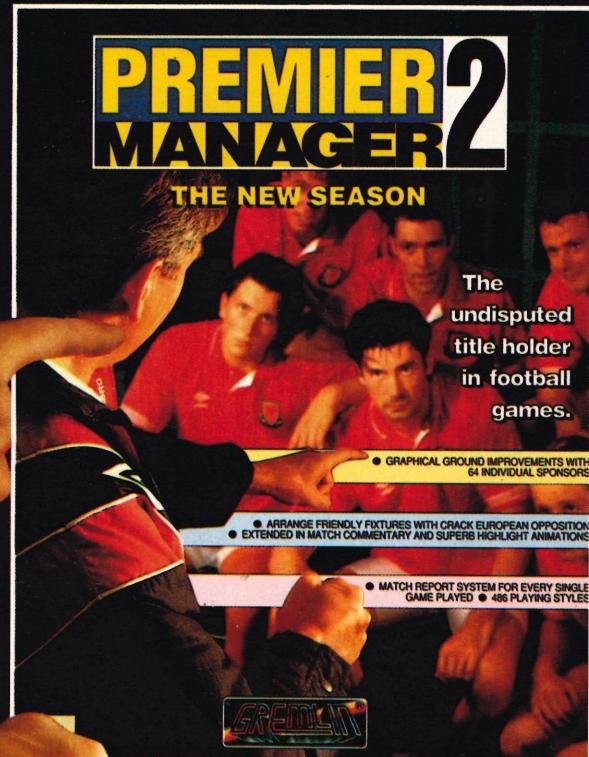
PREMIER MANAGER transformed the face of **STRATEGY** football management games with its accessible and enjoyable game style. It has remained in the charts since its release late in 1992. And now, **PREMIER MANAGER 2** is ready with a whole host of added features. Have you the management skills to turn around and improve your team's performance? Get ready to blow the whistle on **THE** football game for 1993.

FEATURES INCLUDE:

- 16 playing formations with 8 playing styles and 12 match tactics.
- Negotiate wages, bonuses and contracts.
- Comprehensive banking system with changeable interest rates.
- Up to 26 players per team with limit of 4 foreign.
- Set ticket prices and crowd control.
- **IMMEDIATE** sacking possible if you're not up to the job.

"This really is the best bits of all the footy games, bundled together and laid out on a golden plate for you."

The One 90%.



YOU GOT IT.



AVAILABLE ON: AMIGA/A1200 and PC 3.5"

SPECIAL OFFER

Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia

Special upgrade offer

Active Distribution is offering PC Review readers an exclusive competitive upgrade offer to Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia. the CD-ROM based multimedia reference guide.

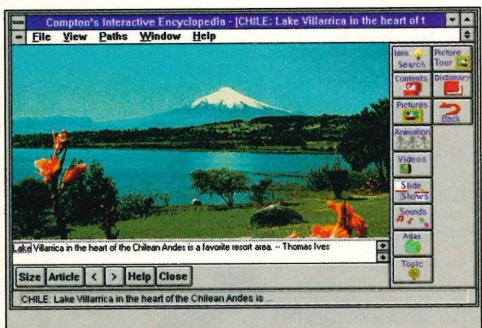
The RRP for Compton's is £352.49, inclusive of Vat, but using the form below, you can obtain the encyclopaedia for just £140.86 (if this seems like an odd amount, it's because it's £119.99 plus Vat). As this is a competitive upgrade offer, in order to participate, you need to include with your form and cheque the cover from the manual (ie, a proof of purchase) from any other CD-based encyclopaedia, such as Grolier's, Encarta, Mammals Multimedia Encyclopaedia, etc — Active says it

will be fairly flexible about the definition of 'encyclopaedia'.

Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia is a whole set of reference books on CD-ROM. As well as over 33,500 articles, the program also contains 10,000 images, 162 videos and animations, 800 maps and audio clips, ranging from speech to musical extracts.

To take advantage of this exclusive offer, all you need to do is to fill in the form below, and send it, together with a cheque made payable to Active Distribution, and the cover from the manual from a CD encyclopaedia, to Encyclopaedia offer, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Please make sure it reaches us by December 15, 1993 and allow 28 days for delivery.

If you would like to find out more about Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia, turn to our feature this month on CD-ROM reference programs, which begins on page 51.



Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia

Yes, I would like to take advantage of Active Distribution's competitive upgrade offer at the special price of £140.86. I enclose with this form a cheque made payable to Active Distribution, and a cover from the manual of the CD-ROM encyclopaedia I own.

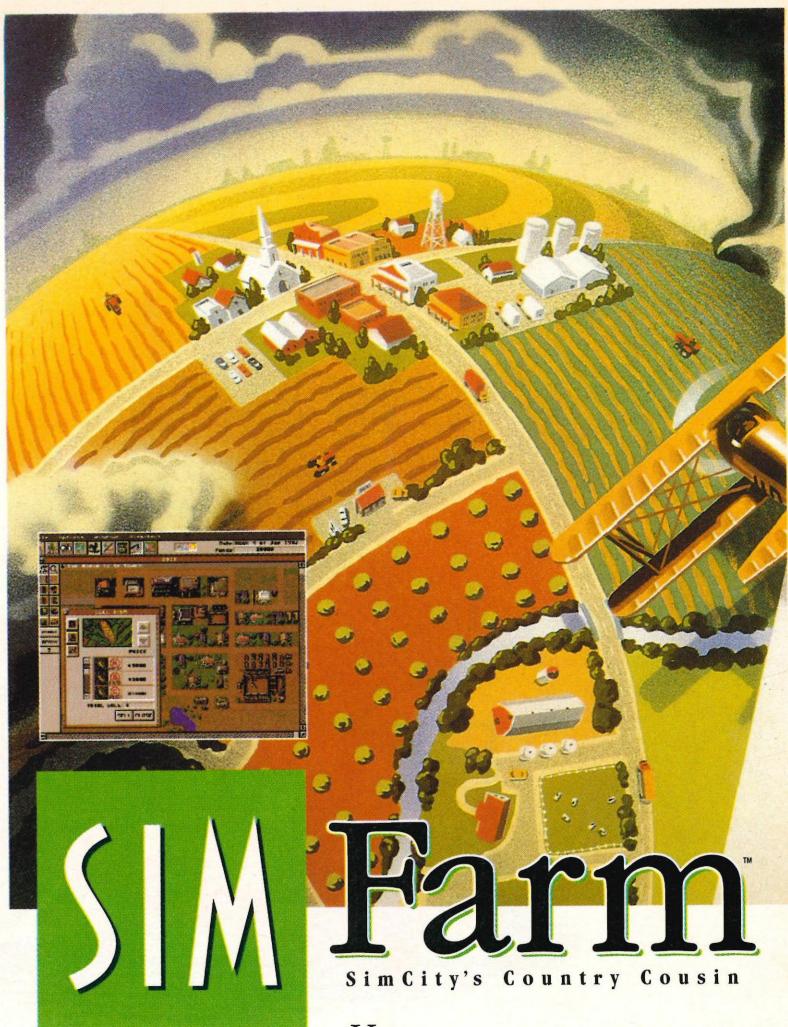
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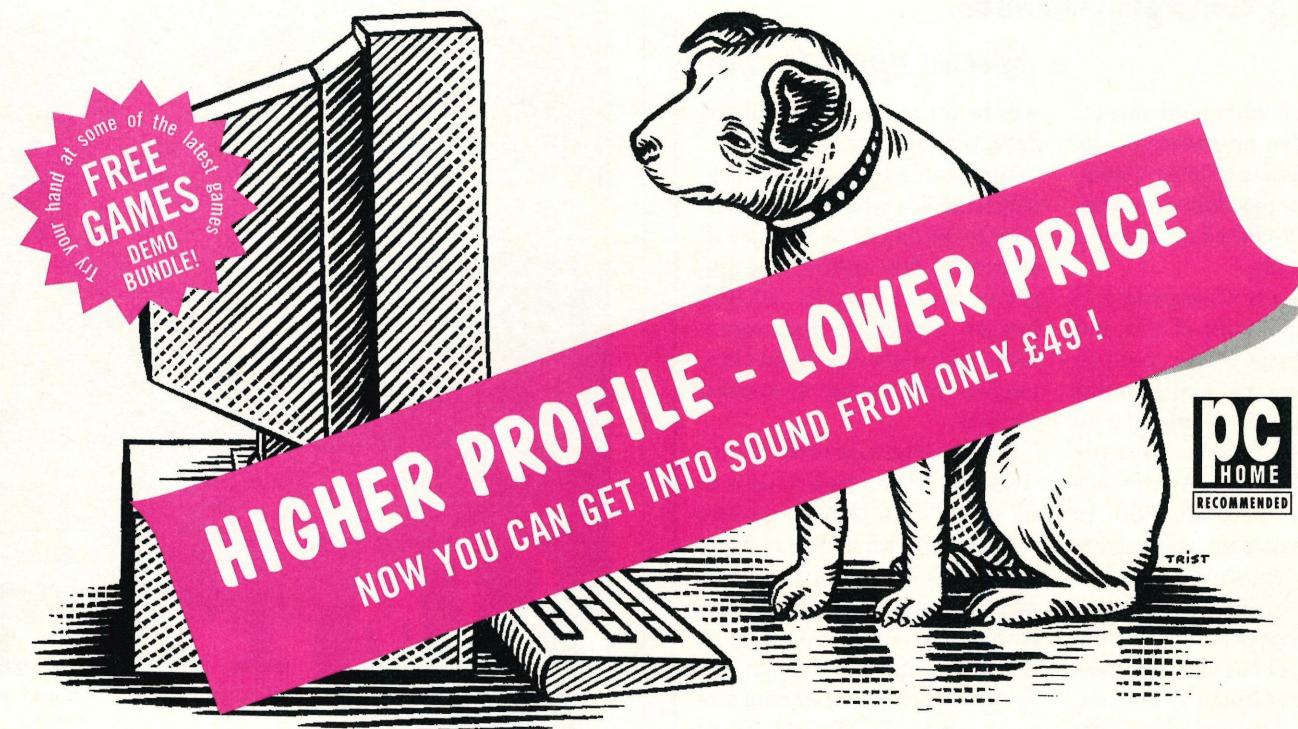
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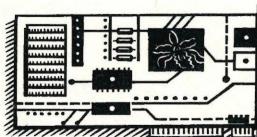
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HIS MASTER'S CHOICE



PC
HOME
RECOMMENDED

Orchid Sound Producer

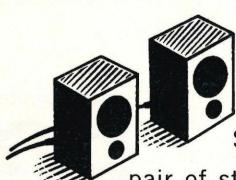


Since his master introduced Sound Producer, a year ago, to bring quality sound to his PC, astoundingly it's

become the popular choice!

For Multimedia to games, fully compatible with SoundBlaster and AdLib, it's been so

well received that *PC Home* made no bones about recommending it!



Which could be because the Sound Producer system includes a pair of stereo speakers, a built-in 4 watt amplifier and its MIDI interface affords access to the world of professional music production.

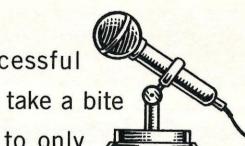
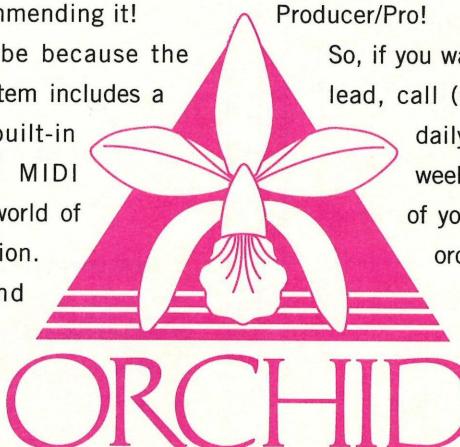


Or because Sound Producer/Pro - with

20-voice stereo FM synthesizer, CD ROM interface, software-controlled studio standard stereo mixer/volume, microphone and Voice Notes software - sounds even better!

What is clear is that its successful pedigree has enabled his master to take a bite out of its bark and cut its price to only £49 for Sound Producer and to £89 for Sound Producer/Pro!

So, if you want to run with the pack, take their lead, call (0256) 817722 - lines are open daily 8 'til 8 including weekends - for details of your nearest dealer, order the higher profile Orchid Sound Producer at a lower price... and make his master's choice!



ORCHID (EUROPE) LTD., BASINGSTOKE, UK. TELEPHONE (0256) 817722 FAX (0256) 64222

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Making the right pitch

Accurately explaining that great idea you've had for a new computer game may be more difficult than you thought. Steve Cooke makes the case for better scripts

Then crisp five pound notes will find their way from my pocket into the hands of whoever comes up with the most impressive answer to the following question: how do you describe a game?

You might think this is easy. PacMan was a single-screen game in which a small animated character moved – under player control – around a maze swallowing dots and (for bonus points) symbols. Also moving round the maze and in pursuit of the player token are four ghosts. Collision with a ghost loses one player life. A limited number of power pills are scattered around the maze and swallowing one of these makes the ghosts vulnerable. The period of vulnerability lasts for a few seconds and during this time if the player token collides with a ghost, the ghost is temporarily banished to a pen at the centre of the maze. Gameplay consists of balancing dot and symbol consumption, avoiding the ghosts and gaining further bonuses when possible by 'penning' the ghosts. Clearing all the dots on a screen leads to the next screen, with the game layout, but where the ghosts move faster.

Phew! That was just PacMan – now try



Eye of the Beholder 1: defying description

describing Eye of the Beholder. You'd obviously need much more space.

Actually, you'd need a colossal amount of space, because in one important respect even our verbose description of PacMan is completely useless. If the game did not exist, the description above would be quite inadequate to serve as a guide to producing the game. Our description, in other words, is some miles away from being a 'script' in the same sense that a screenplay for a film is a 'script'.

**Good
scripts
save money,
save mistakes,
and encourage
investment
in good
projects**

With increased development budgets and ever more complex technologies, being able to describe a game accurately in script form is becoming ever more important. Good scripts save money, save mistakes, and encourage investment in good projects. The games industry needs to begin developing a set of concise conventions for describing games. Of course, just as in film, there will always be

nuances in the final product that go beyond the original blueprint. But we need something a lot better than the so-called game designs we get today.

For example, I have in my hands a game design from a prestigious development company (all names have been withheld to protect the guilty). It consists of seven sections and totals about 30 pages.

This document starts with a scenario – a mind-numbing attempt at a science-fiction mini-novel which is presumably meant to get us excited but actually has nothing whatsoever to do with games. There are then about five pages describing what is called "game mechanics", which, if a programmer paid any attention to it, would impose absurd restrictions on the gameplay, since it doesn't even mention player interaction – it just tells you what you have to kill. Finally, there are some notes on graphic representation and then, just in case you

weren't already doing business with someone else, a 'conclusion' which is – yes, another mini-novel to wind things up.

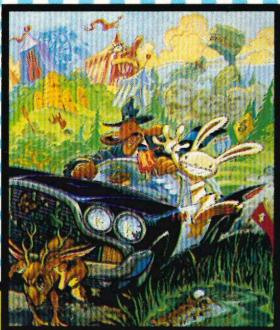
The supposed aim of this document is to raise investment for the development of a game. Most software publishers have to deal with designs of this nature and you'd be horrified to hear that hundreds of thousands of pounds of development money change hands on the basis of this sort of thing. No wonder that coming up with a good game, on time, on budget and by design is currently all but impossible.

So what do you think there should be in a game design document? Entries on paper, please, to me at the PC Review office, or by e-mail to electric@cix.com-pulink.co.uk. We'll discuss the results in the January 1994 issue. And by the way, the game design I just mentioned above succeeded in raising oodles of development money and ended up being a major release on the PC. It was crap.

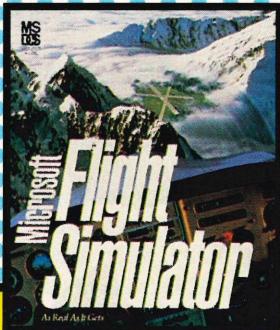
**THE
COOKE
REPORT**

USE YOUR HEAD THIS CHRISTMAS!

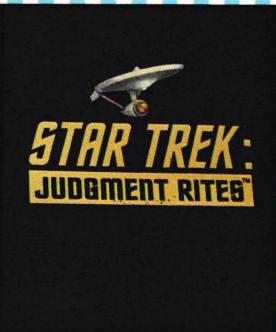
well...you asked
for it but are you
gonna get it?
just cut out the pic,
make sure your
nearest and dearest
brings it to us. They part
with the money,
you slam it in the
machine - doddle!



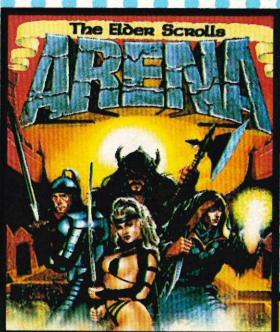
Sam & Max



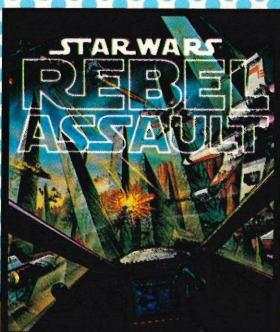
Flight Simulator 5.0



Star Trek 2™
'judgment rites'



The Elder Scrolls



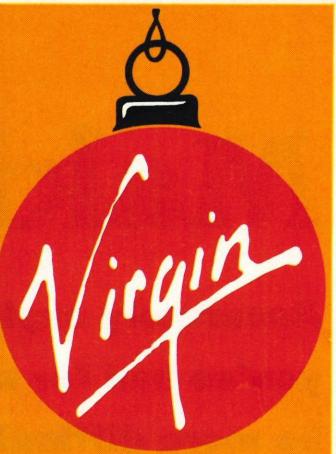
Star Wars
'Rebel Assault'

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pc games

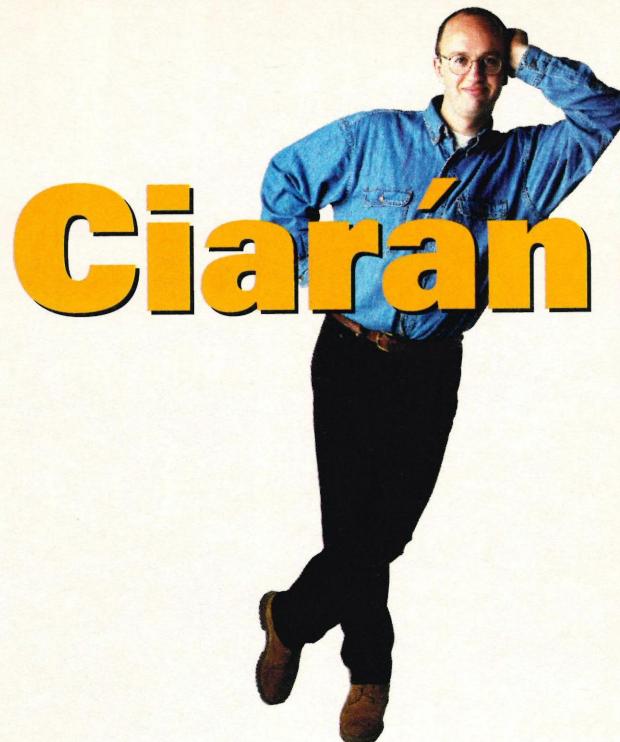
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GIVE YOU A VOUCHER TO
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GAMING CENTER

ahead of the game



Ciarán Brennan

Stop this CD revolution, I want to get off

In the four years or so that I've been actively involved in PC gaming, I've been privileged enough to see the arrival of the CD-ROM like some sort of great technological train approaching from the distance.

At first, it was just a distant speck on the horizon, vague and mysterious, but chock-full of promise and potential. Whatever this locomotive turned out to be, those of us watching just knew that it was going to change our lives, forever and for better.

Some time later, we remained rooted to the same trackside. Maybe by now we'd noticed that the oncoming monster wasn't quite as shiny and beautiful as we'd first imagined, but the promise of future riches still held us there, captivated by all of the glittering promises and hopes which were coming our way on the CD Express.

Now, however, at the end of 1993, it's beginning to look as though this new arrival isn't a shiny express at all, but a hideous smoke-belching freight train – and worse still, we're not standing on the platform, we're tied to the track.

This, I'm sure you'll agree, is a pretty cynical and tortured metaphor, but it does serve to sum up the feelings of despondency and cynicism which have begun to set in among many spectators on the PC games business, myself included.

The most telling words on the subject published of late came in the October issue of this magazine. In the special report entitled Decline and Fall of the

Floppy Disk, Electronic Arts' European boss, Mark Lewis, revealed that, alongside true 'multimedia' CD-ROM titles, will come another breed of essentially conventional PC games, but delivered on CD rather than floppy disk.

These games will be identical in every way to their disk-based counterparts, but they will still have to be installed to the user's hard drive because not even the quickest CD-ROM drive is capable of delivering code to the PC's processors at an acceptably speedy rate.

The bottom line, therefore, is that instead of being the new technological Messiah we'd all been awaiting, CD-ROM is actually going to be little more than a digital DHL, useless except as a delivery medium.

Most of us worked out quite some time ago that it's not technology which makes good games, it's good ideas. Lemmings, as a perfect example, would not be improved by use of texture mapping or SVGA graphics, while Ultima Underworld would remain a classic role-player even in four-colour CGA.

There are, of course, cases where clever use of technology has been combined with a strong idea to produce a near perfect package: take X-Wing, for example –

finds that compact disc technology is not all that it was cracked up to be

**... instead of
being the
new technological
Messiah, CD-ROM
is going to be little
more than a
digital DHL ...**

where would that be without the high speed graphics and wonderfully atmospheric sound effects?

Multi-coloured palettes, stereo sound circuits, monstrous storage capacities and supersonic processors can and do improve some games, but no amount of these essentially cosmetic touches will ever make a poor game acceptable.

The Big Lie which has been sold to us with regard to compact disc technology is that not only is it going to offer all of the above (and it's not), but also that the mere addition of a CD-ROM drive to your PC is going to transform it into a 'multimedia entertainment centre' – or whatever this month's buzzword is.

The truth is that computer games on compact discs will be no better and, despite the fact that CD production is infinitely cheaper than multiple floppy disk duplication, probably no cheaper than your current favourites.

On the other hand, a CD games collection will sit more comfortably in your living room than an untidy bunch of floppy disks, so maybe the great change-over will be worth it after all.

**Lord of the
Rings has an
improved inter-
face, an
automapper but
not much else.
Is this really the
future of CD
gaming?**



"WAIT 'TILL YOU SEE
THE REDS OF THEIR EYES..."

T2
THE ARCADE GAME



VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A NORLEDGE/HICKMAN PRODUCTION A PROBE GAME "TERMINATOR 2"
MATT LAMPRELL, NIKKI HEMMING, DAVID MILLER, WRITTEN BY DICK SHUNNARY, EDITED BY MUSTAPHA SCALPEL
WARDROBE MAHATMA COAT ORIGINAL SCORE 205,500 CASES JO KING HUGH MERR
BASED ON THE FILM "TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY" DIRECTOR JONNY WATSON

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Virgin

Some days nothin'

ALIEN

VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
PAUL DOWLING SEAN BRENNAN MUSIC BY BEN
EXECUTIVE REPRODUCER HERO DAVISON EDIT
BASED ON THE FILM "A

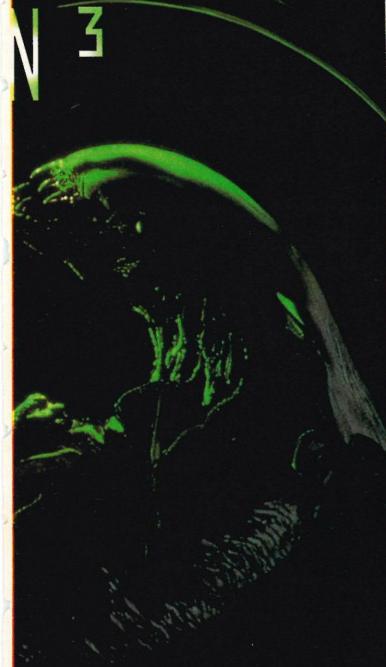
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Now showing on PC & Amiga

Now showi

g seems to go right.



VINCENT PRESENTS A PROBE PRODUCTION "ALIEN 3"
COLUMBIA SCREENPLAY BY JOY PAD EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JOHN CARVER
OR PHIL MEDIATOR DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LEN SCAPP
ALIEN 3" DIRECTED BY D. RECTOR

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Virgin

Lose is a four letter word.



MORTAL KOMBAT

VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A NORLEDGE/HICKMAN PRODUCTION A PROBE GAME
LEE THAL HUGH JUPPERCUT DANIELLE WOODYATT PETER BALL SCREENPLAY BY ANNE NIHILATE
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY D. CAPITATION EDITOR R. CADE-CONVERSION DIRECTOR PAUL MILES

Acclaim
MIDWAY

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Virgin

ing on Amiga

Now showing on PC & Amiga

Virgin

WIN

A 486DX PC

We do try to push the boat out when it comes to competition prizes and this month we reckon we've surpassed ourselves. We've put together a set of mouth-watering prizes in this special competition which will take place over two months: this issue and Issue 27, dated January 1994, and in the shops on December 15th.

The prizes

Firstly, we have no less than a 486-based PC, complete with internal, double speed, multi-session CD-ROM drive from Unica. Just check out the specs of this machine in the panel to see what's on offer: 33MHz 486DX processor, 4Mb RAM, 250Mb hard disk, 14" colour monitor and a superb bundle of CD-ROM software, including the stunning Hutchinson Encyclopaedia on CD.

Normally this Unica Media Pro 486-33SX sells for £1,756.63 (including Vat) — the winner of this competition gets the machine for just the price of the stamp on the entry form!

Unica the company specialises in multimedia products — it's not only the UK's largest CD software supplier, but it also produces peripherals, such as CD-ROM drives and upgrade kits, to NEC, Kodak,

Unica Media Pro 486-33

- * 486DX processor running at 33MHz
- * 4Mb RAM
- * 250Mb hard disk
- * Panasonic double speed, multi-session CD-ROM drive
- * Sound Blaster Pro sound card
- * 1.44Mb 3.5" disk drive
- * Microsoft compatible mouse
- * 16 million colour bus VGA card
- * Non-interlaced 14" colour monitor
- * MS-DOS version 6
- * Windows 3.1
- * CD software: Hutchinson Encyclopaedia
1993 Guinness Multimedia Disc of Records
The Animals
Hot Stuff! (graphics gallery)
The 7th Guest

Normal RRP: £1,756.63 including Vat



Creative Labs, and Media Vision, among others. The Media Pro range is its own series of highly specified multimedia PCs.

One very lucky winner will receive this Unica Media Pro 486-33 machine, but three more people are also in for a treat, with the three Dracula packages we've also lined up as prizes.

Prizes from the crypt

Each package contains no less than five versions of the classic Transylvanian story, starting with VHS video of Francis Ford Coppola's film, Bram Stoker's Dracula, starring Anthony Hopkins,

Keanu Reeves, Gary Oldman and Wynona Ryder. This video is due to go on sale on December 1st, for £13.99. As a video companion, the pack also includes The Making of Dracula.

Also in the package is Psygnosis's PC version of Dracula, a first person perspective fight and flight game which captures much of the dark atmosphere of the story (reviewed in PC Review, Issue 25).

The box of goodies is completed with the compact disc (audio) of the film's soundtrack and the role-playing board game based on the Dracula legend — £100-worth of a classic horror legend for each winner.

WITH CD-ROM DRIVE

PLUS DRACULA — THE AUDIO, VIDEO AND COMPUTER EXPERIENCE

THREE COMPLETE PACKAGES TO BE WON

How to enter

Step 1 First, you need to answer the questions which appear below.

Step 2 When you've got the answers, note them down somewhere in a safe place.

Step 3 Wait for the next edition of PC Review for further instructions.

The questions

1 Who played Count Dracula in the Francis Ford Coppola film?

- a) Anthony Hopkins
- b) Keanu Reeves
- c) Gary Oldman

2 Name three of the CDs bundled with the Media Pro 486-33.

3 What can a multi-session CD-ROM drive do that single-session drives can't?

- a) be used more than once before data is erased.
- b) read CD-ROMs which have been written to more than once, such as Kodak's Photo CDs.
- c) read more than one CD-ROM simultaneously.

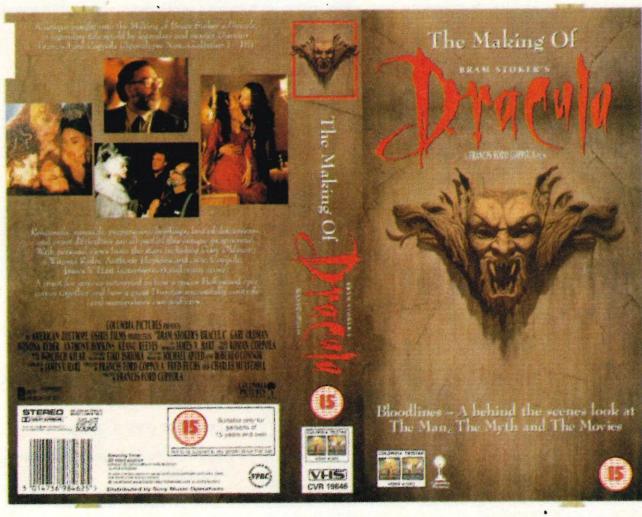
Don't send us anything just yet!

Remember, there's no coupon printed this month because you are obviously going to need the answers to next month's questions as well. We'll publish the entry form in next month's edition of PC Review.

The rules

- Entries will only be accepted **after** the second part of this competition appears in next month's PC Review
- Only one entry per household, please
- Employees of EMAP Images, Unica and Columbia TriStar Video, their families and associates are not eligible to enter this competition
- All normal competition rules apply and the editor's decision is, as always, incontrovertibly final

Over £2,000 worth of prizes to be won



Drac attack

The Dracula audio, video and games packages contain the following items:

- Dracula, the PC computer game from Psygnosis
- Bram Stoker's Dracula, the Francis Ford Coppola film (on VHS video)
- The Making of Dracula, VHS video
- Dracula, the CD (audio) soundtrack
- Dracula, the role-playing board game

when you've foun

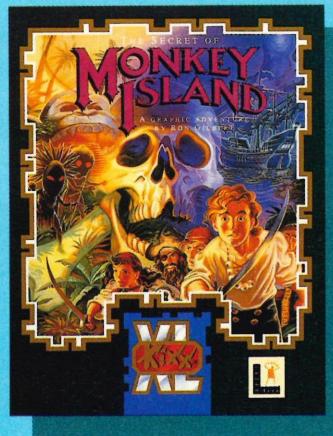
new releases

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EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

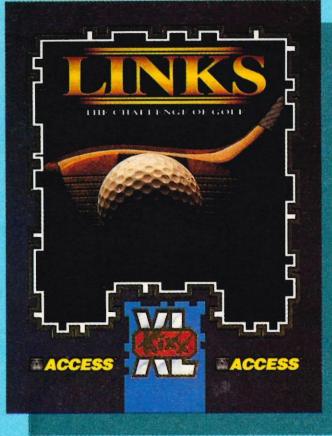
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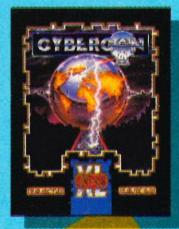
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ROBIN HOOD



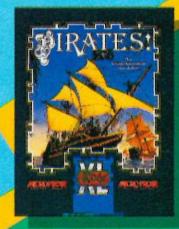
NIGHT SHIFT™



CYBERCON III



F15 STRIKE EAGLE II



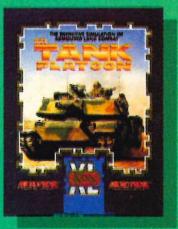
PIRATES!



F19 STEALTH FIGHTER



INDIANA JONES
and the LAST CRUSADE
THE GRAPHIC ADVENTURE



MI TANK PLATOON

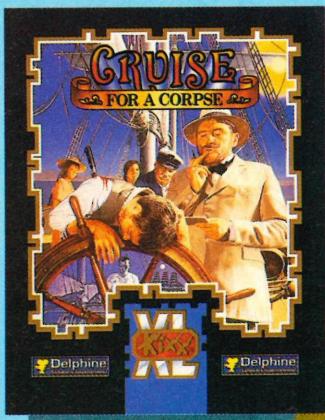
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d eXcellence...



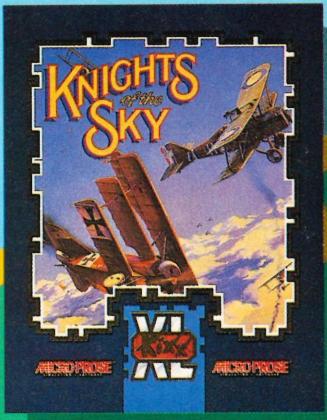
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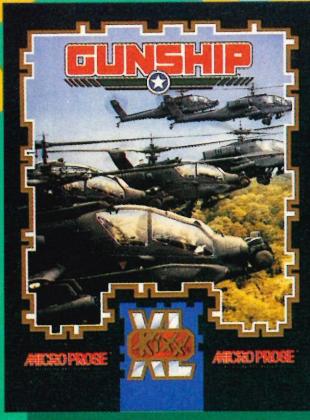
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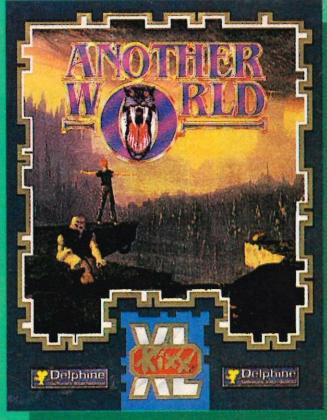
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Pirates!		£12.99	£12.99	£12.99	-
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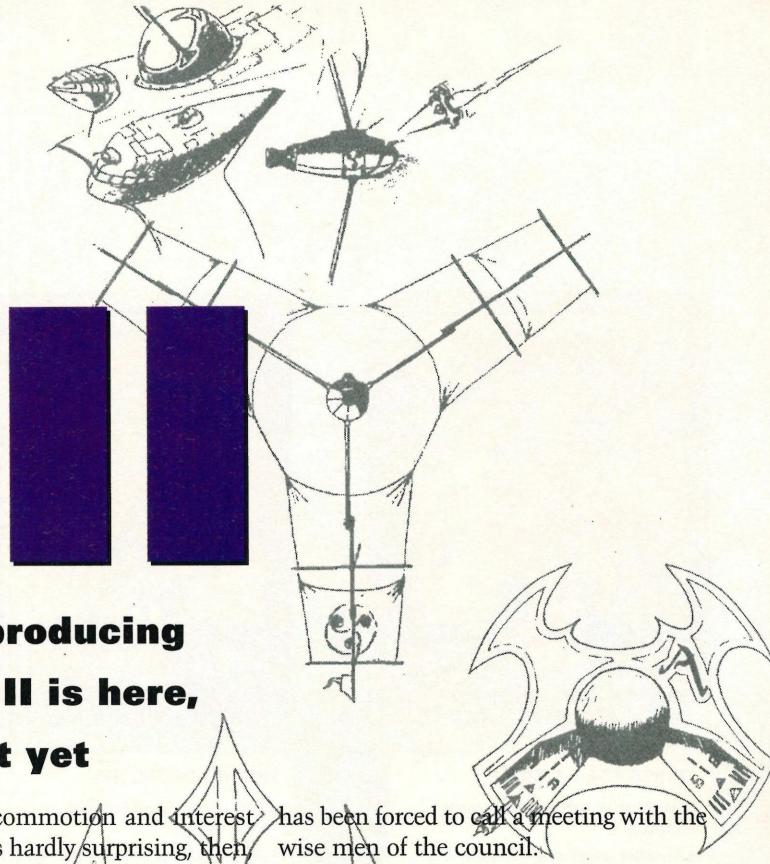
SIERRA



Kixx, Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford,
Birmingham, B6 7AX. Tel No: 021 625 3311.

Title	Inca II
Publisher	Coktel Vision
Contact	(0734) 303322
Release date	November
Genre	Adventure
Price	£TBA

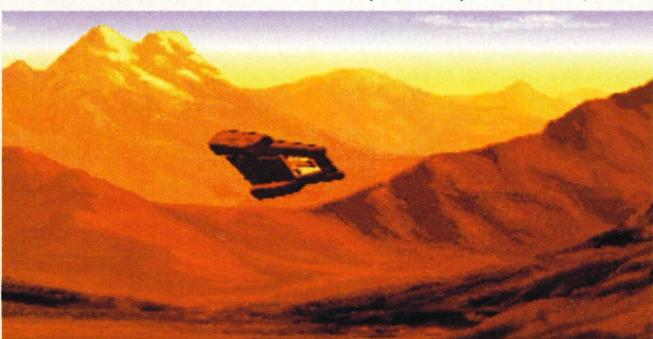
Inca II



Coktel Vision is gaining a reputation for producing original and impressive games. Now Inca II is here, and it looks as though it could be the best yet

A lot of work has gone into the graphics, as you can see from this atmospheric shot.

I'm not sure what's going on here: I seem to be stuck in a room full of Easter Island statues. Pretty, though.



Inca was certainly one of the more interesting games released last year, combining the traditional legends and customs of Peruvian civilisation with futuristic space combat.

Few games give you the mind-blowing opportunity to fly through space in a ship which is shaped like a Peruvian ceremonial dagger, after all.

The quirky mix of action and adventure wasn't entirely to everyone's taste, but it

caused a lot of commotion and interest nonetheless. It is hardly surprising, then, that Coktel Vision has developed a sequel, and that it promises to be even better than the original.

Inca II is set some years after Inca in which you, as Eldorado (stop sniggering), completed your difficult quest to become the Grand Inca. Eldorado is now somewhat older, with a wife, Aclla, and an adult son, Atahualpa.

With the same useful powers which he acquired in the original game, Eldorado rules the four quarters of the Empire, leaving only the ancient lands to be controlled by his trusty arch-enemy, the conquistador Aguirre.

Unfortunately, a mysterious asteroid has appeared out of nowhere, and is threatening the balance of the empire. It has been linked to a number of seemingly natural catastrophes, and so Eldorado

has been forced to call a meeting with the wise men of the council.

Despite numerous warnings from the wise men, Atahualpa sets off to investigate the asteroid. Will he succeed in freeing the empire of its evil influence, or will his impulsive nature land him in even deeper trouble?

As an adventure, Inca II certainly looks extremely promising. It offers a large selection of mind-bending puzzles all based on Inca mythology. Inca II is fairly non-linear in its approach, which gives you the freedom to choose the order in which you want to solve different parts of the game. There is a lot of variety in the gameplay, whether it's solving puzzles set by the mystic llama, flying through space in pursuit of Aguirre's henchmen, or journeying across the desert in an old steam locomotive.

Although this game is an adventure first and foremost, it contains several space combat sequences. The amazing thing is that the graphics in these sections put a lot of dedicated space combat games to shame. They are, quite simply, stunning. The spaceships have been painstakingly created using 3D pre-calculated graphics and look far more realistic than the polygon-based sprites found in a lot of space simulations these days.

The space combat sequences certainly look very impressive, but what if you're the sort of person who prefers to get through an adventure by solving puzzles rather than going through action phases? No problem. You can choose whether to complete certain stages in the game one



way or the other, which means that you can approach the game from whatever angle best suits your abilities.

It also means that once you have completed the game in a certain way, you can always go back and try another approach if you wish, rather like solving the different paths in LucasArts' Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis.

The length and difficulty of the space combat and action sequences is directly affected by your own abilities, because they are automatically adjusted to the player's skills. If you're weak in this area, less emphasis will be placed upon combat, whereas if you're doing well, the enemies will provide you with even more of a challenge.

Throughout the game, the graphics are of a consistently high standard. Many of the scenes and objects have been hand drawn by a graphic artist, but are so realistic that they appear to have been digitised instead. The superb fractal-based landscapes will make you catch your breath, I promise, and the animations tended to run very smoothly indeed on my 33MHz 486 PC.

The speech will be fully synchronised on the finished version of Inca II, so hopefully the characters won't look as if they're appearing in a badly-dubbed Japanese soap opera.

The whole presentation of the game to date is very slick. As well as having some of the best graphics that I've seen recently, Inca II also boasts a stirring and

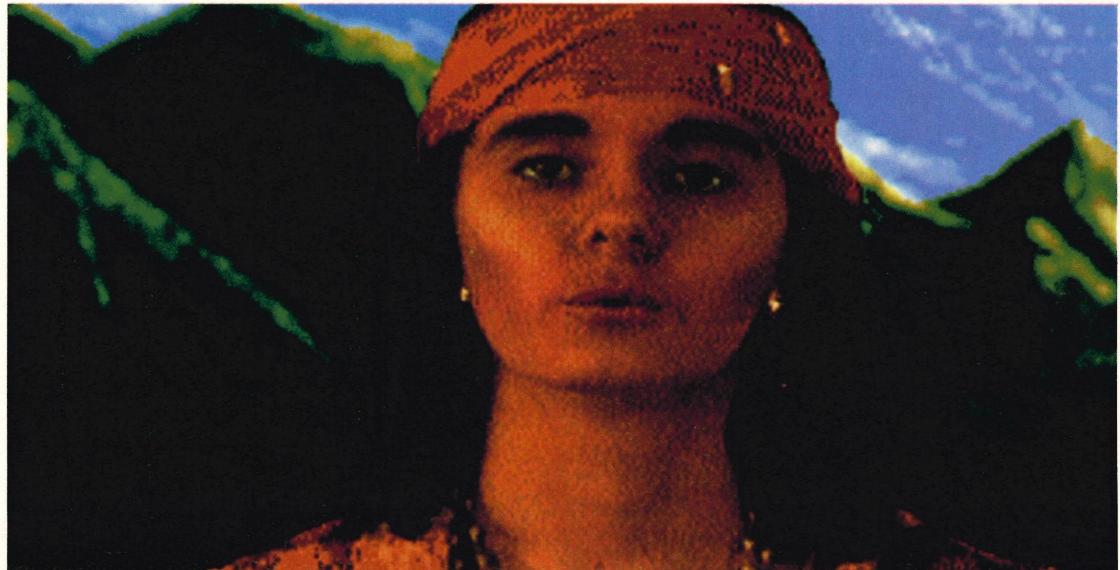
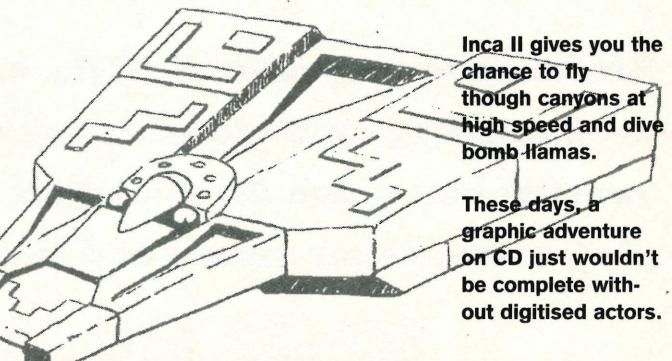
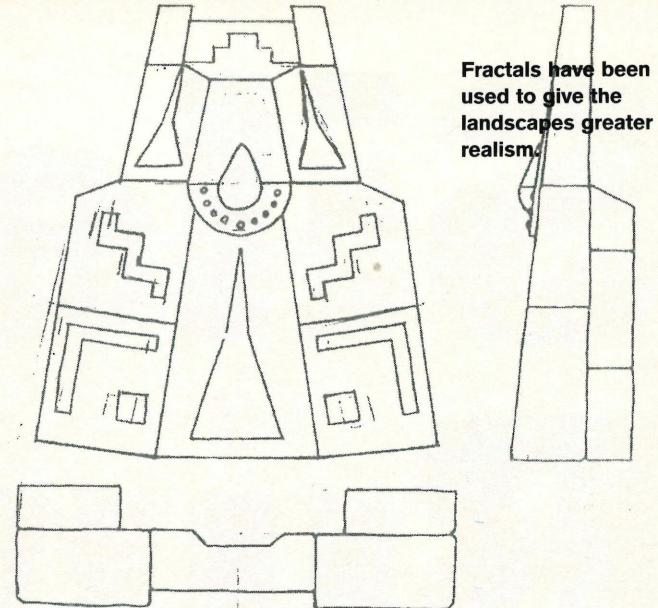
atmospheric soundtrack. It's the sort of game that looks absolutely tailor-made for CD-ROM. If you haven't considered purchasing a CD-ROM drive already, one look at this game is almost guaranteed to change your mind.

So what about the game itself? Inca II appears to have a greater depth of gameplay than its predecessor, but doesn't seem to have sacrificed any of its originality whatsoever.

It wasn't quite finished when I saw it, so I couldn't judge whether or not the gameplay would actually live up to its marvellous visuals. What there was looked extremely impressive, however. Having just completed Coktel Vision's Lost in Time (reviewed in Issue 25), I'm definitely looking forward to getting my teeth into Inca II.

Look for a review in either the January or February issue of PC Review early next year. I'm hoping that it'll prove every bit as wonderful as it looks.

■ Cal Jones



Silent Running

After the recent rush of flight sims, everybody who's anybody seems to be programming an underwater game. Dean Evans, not generally known for his aquaphobia, crash dives and sits silently on the ocean floor listening to the ping of the sonar sweep and the distant chug of propellers

SSN-21 Seawolf

Seawolf has a highly realistic sonar room where the identities of the ships can be discerned by listening to the sound of their engines. This screen shows the sound patterns made by a frigate.

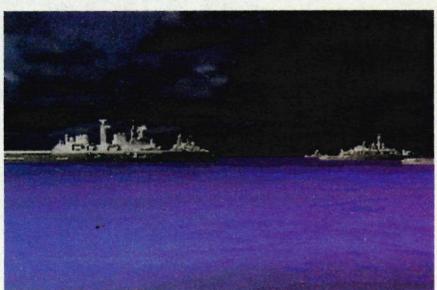
Remember 688 Attack Sub? Well, in 1989 this acclaimed submarine sim allowed armchair captains to torpedo enemy shipping, crash dive and rig for depth charge attacks without leaving the cosy comfort of the easy chair. Hundreds of people used to get their kicks by sitting patiently on the ocean bed in these claustrophobic metal cylinders, dodging pursuing destroyers and calcu-

lating angles of attack and torpedo running times. Strategic yes, thrilling no.

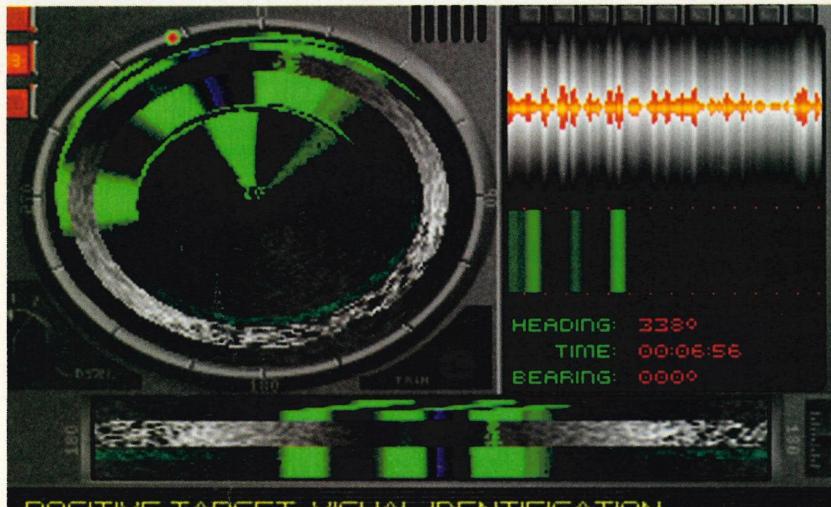
In 1994 Electronic Arts will release SSN-21 Seawolf, (the sequel to 688) based on the proposed Attack Sub, a hefty piece of US hardware that has yet to reach construction. After a military coup in Cuba and Russia, a rebel Russian fleet has set sail from Archangel towards Cuba. Commanding a Seawolf class submarine you have orders to stop them while insur-

ing that the situation doesn't escalate into a nuclear confrontation.

Seawolf has 33 very difficult missions and like Seal Team you can play these missions individually or plump for the more challenging campaign option which links all the missions together. Featuring the most realistic sonar system I've ever seen in a submarine sim (you can tell the ships apart because of the different sounds they make),



Against the thundery sky, Seawolf uses digitised ships. Sadly what you can't see here is the rolling swell of the ocean.



digitised shipping, over 100 sampled sounds (including the odd burst of whalesong) and intense, often moody gameplay, Seawolf is looking to be a very impressive and very complex strategy game indeed.

Title	SSN-21 Seawolf
Developer	Electronic Arts
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Contact	(0753) 549442
Release date	late February
Genre	submarine sim
Price	£44.99

Aces of the Deep

Forget the highly unoriginal name because Aces of the Deep is a game that aims to do for the U-boat what Aces of the Pacific has done for the humble Corsair. To put it simply: Sierra has taken the same technological and historical detail that made Aces of the Pacific such a big success and has now turned its gaze towards the famous maritime theatre of World War Two.



AOTD doesn't use digitised images: instead it boasts shaded polygon graphics similar to the aerial games.

As you can see by the screenshots, Aces of the Deep uses the same basic game structure as the other Aces titles and like AOTP you can choose to fight for either the Germans, the Americans or the British in both single battles or a full-blown campaign option which sends you half way across the globe.

Featuring detailed polygon graphics, Gouraud shading, digitised sounds and sophisticated enemy intelligence, Aces of

the Deep may not look very pretty at first glance, but the polygon-based graphics system makes for a more flexible, if less visually realistic submarine game. If it manages to capture even half the playability of previous Aces titles then Aces of the Deep (the first in a projected Great Warships series) should be a hell of a lot of fun. Definitely a game to watch out for.

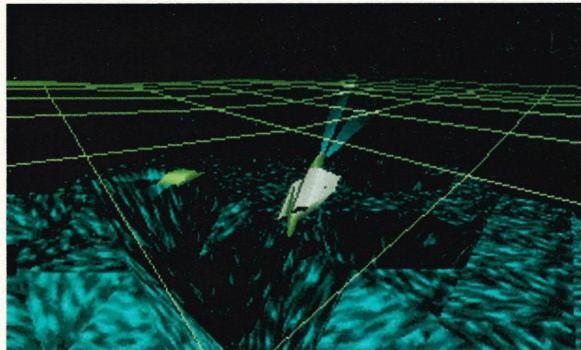


If you have played an Aces game before, you'll no doubt recognise the main menu screen. Like Aces of the Pacific, you can take on a single mission or even a whole campaign. There is also the obligatory external preview mode, so you can see your sub.

Title	Aces of the Deep
Developer	Sierra
Publisher	Sierra
Contact	(0734) 303322
Release date	December
Genre	submarine sim
Price	&TBA

Subwar 2050

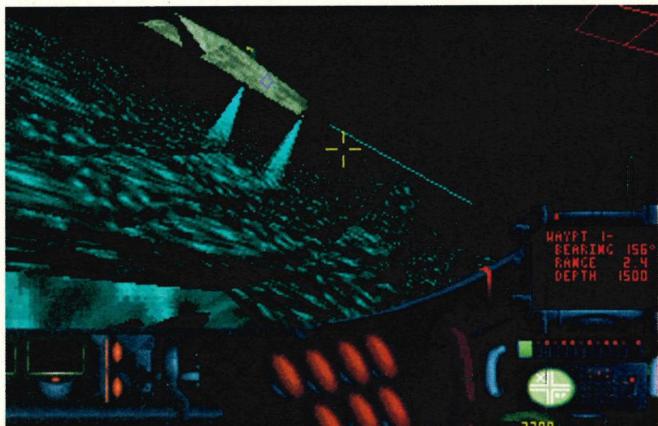
And now for something completely different. Set in a fictional 2050, you are a freelance submarine pilot who has just been hired by a large, ruthless, world-dominating corporation. The world's mineral resources have become scarce and beneath the ocean waves (where the mining continues) a fierce battle is being fought for control of the excavation rights, using the latest underwater technology.



A small one-man fighter sub climbs up quickly through the thermal layer, spotlights piercing the gloom.

Subwar 2050 puts you in control of a fighter submarine in which you defend your company's territory against attacks from their rivals. From your base on a mothership you will take on missions that vary from simple reconnaissance patrols to covert demolitions, duelling other subs in frantic underwater battles over a stunning textured seascape.

More than just a 'flight sim under the sea', Subwar 2050 creates a whole new genre. There is no sitting on the seabed, no silent running and not a single periscope in sight, just fast, frenzied gameplay in varying shades of turquoise and green. With a variety of missions and campaigns, Subwar is a refreshing shift away from the usual sub game, invoking memories of Leviathan, the Abyss and even Spielberg's new series, Seaquest DSV. Watch out for a review next issue.

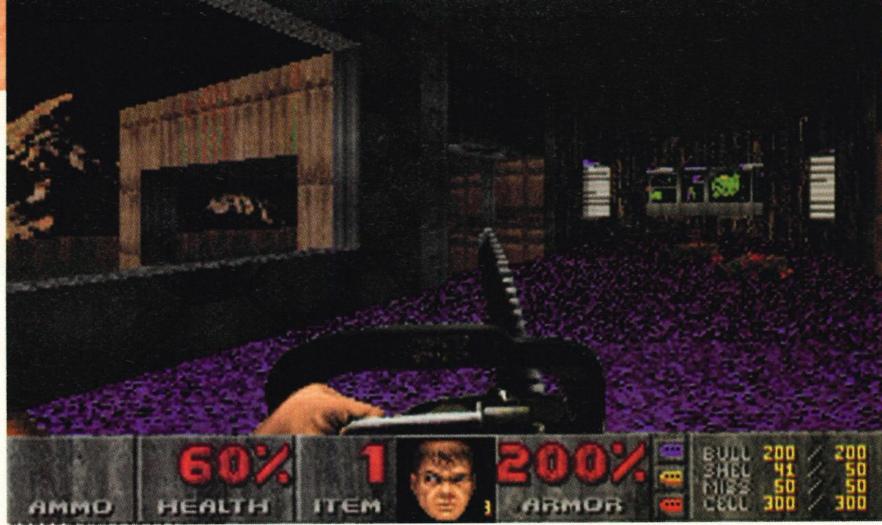


Looking left at your mothership: the best way to describe Subwar 2050 is by comparing it to a flight sim. Like a flight sim you get to 'fly' a number of missions, you travel with a wingman and you've also got access to a wealth of nifty external views.

Title	Subwar 2050
Developer	MicroProse
Publisher	MicroProse
Contact	(0454) 326532
Release date	late November
Genre	submarine sim
Price	£44.99

PREVIEW

Title	Doom
Publisher	ID/Transend
Contact	(0274) 622228
Release date	Early December
Genre	Arcade adventure
Price	Shareware £5 Registered £34.99



DOOM

Top: A quick chainsaw frenzy will give you a fair idea that Doom isn't going to be the most politically correct game the world has ever seen.

Far right: having an itchy trigger finger is definitely going to be an advantage in Doom, unless you want to end up like the corpses on the wall in the bottom picture.

Shareware has its fans, but it's still rare to find a shareware game that can compete on an equal footing with the best full-priced commercial stuff these days. This is largely because of the massive expense involved in producing today's graphically-led epics. But ID and Apogee managed it with Wolfenstein 3D in its time, and, if first looks are anything to go by, Doom is well on the way to doing the same – if not even better.

Doom is not the sequel to Wolfenstein 3D (Apogee is still working on that, with, rumour has it, two designers poached from Origin who were involved in the creation of Ultima Underworld 2). Doom is being developed solely by ID. But it does use an improved version of the 3D game engine in Wolfenstein, and the style and atmosphere of the game are very similar, minus the Nazi paraphernalia and with greater variety.

So, you still view your grim surroundings from a first-person 3D perspective, your favourite gun held firmly in front of you, and move and turn in any direction with the cursor keys.

The speed with which the game pans the view round and rushes forward and back is nothing short of remarkable. Yes, Wolfenstein could do it, but Doom is carrying that much extra baggage, because the complexity, detail and texture of the 256-colour graphics are easily comparable with any state of the art commercial game. Yet where they struggle to shift the screen along, Doom simply flies even in this beta stage of development.

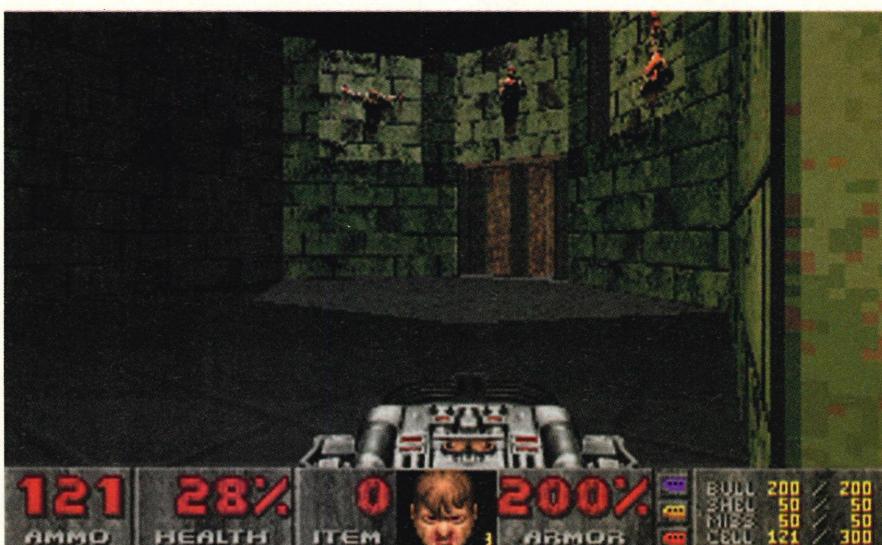
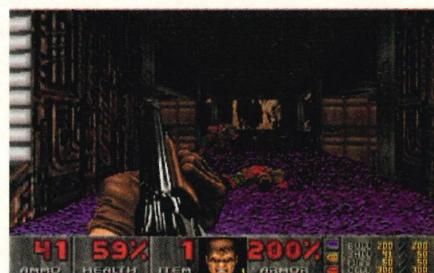
The aim of the game is essentially very simple: stay alive and progress through the levels, picking up new weapons (shotguns, chainsaws, mini-guns, etc), ammunition and medicine as you go. But the presentation is very sophisticated, including a built-in auto-mapper, hidden doors, traps and switches and, in theory, a multi-player network game option that could prove to be an absolute riot of blood and mayhem.

Ah, yes, 'mayhem'. How could I possibly neglect to mention Doom's other

rather 'endearing' character? It's absolutely brimming over with gore from start to finish. Five seconds into the game and there's blood and corpses everywhere as you launch into a chainsaw frenzy. It looks like being great, politically incorrect fun, but it's also the sort of game which you really don't want to buy for your kids — in fact, it may well end up with a parental warning sticker in the States on this account.

Doom will be available on shareware release from Transend for a mere £5 from the end of this month. If the finished article manages to deliver what it promises in the current beta versions, it's going to be one hell of a game indeed. How commercial games publishers can carry on producing block scrolling RPGs and selling them as 'state of the art' when Doom moves like this for five quid is completely beyond me.

■ John Bennett



Title	Digital Love
Publisher	Mandscape
Developer	Hex
Contact	(0444) 246333
Release date	End November
Genre	Aid to relaxation
Price	ca £25

DIGITAL LOVE

Digital Love is the misleadingly exciting title of a CD-ROM aid to relaxation. The idea is to reduce your stress levels using various software modules.

These programs use standard relaxation aids, such as gently moving coloured patterns with accompanying mood music, chanting — yes, you get to chant along with your CD — yoga-style exercises depicted on screen for you to follow, and colour therapy. Rather than diligently working your way through the lot, the idea is that you should spend ten minutes every so often 'using' the module which suits you best to wind down from the stresses of everyday life.

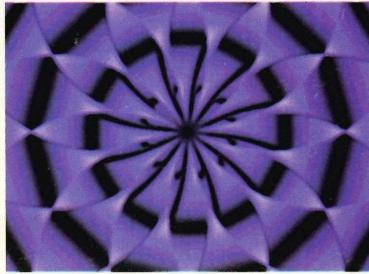


There are six different versions of the kaleidoscopic patterns, which change slightly each time you view them, to retain your interest in the pattern itself. The chants are of the long drawn-out "OMM" variety; the colour therapy really is simply showing big blocks of colour on-screen: the colour therapy experts insisted that adding any high resolution visual interest would defeat the object of the exercise. The yoga exercises concentrate on standard neck and shoulder muscle flexing.

So far, the only stressed-out PC Review member to have tested an early version of Digital Love is me, possibly the biggest sceptic in the world when it comes to this sort of thing. Wired up to a brain wave monitor, I sat through the kaleidoscope part of the program. Brain wave activity was subsequently shown to have descended to pretty well nil within seconds of the module starting, which is fairly impressive, although I hope this isn't just an indicator of my normal state of mind.

Actually, there is nothing in Digital Love that is controversial: all the modules — even the chanting — are examples of well-established relaxation techniques. But having the program set up on the computer may simply encourage the overstressed to use it regularly rather than resorting to a quick arm stretch every so often.

■ Christina Erskine



NODDY'S BIG ADVENTURE

Noddy's Big Adventure is the sequel to the highly successful Noddy's Playtime. It takes children to the North West corner of Toyland and includes 13 different programs to educate and entertain children for hours on end.

This graded creativity and entertainment package is specifically designed for 3-7 year olds and relates to the early requirements of the National Curriculum.

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How to buy a PC



Buying a home PC? Dean Evans and John Bennett set out a specification and put six of the latest 486s to the test

Buying a home PC must rank as one of the single most expensive ways of handing a lot of money to a complete stranger — after the house, the car and the kids, that is. So it's not the sort of decision you want to make unless you have a fair idea that what you're getting for your money is what you actually want.

But just look at the number of adverts clamouring for your attention, the number of machines of all shapes and sizes in the shops, and all that jargon that surrounds anything mechanical. How on earth do you choose the right machine for you? How much do you have to spend? Who do you trust?

To a certain extent, the answer to the first two of these questions depends very much on what you want to do with the PC. The problem is that not many people know *exactly* what they want it to do right now, let alone in six months.

It's easy if all you want is a spot of word processing, a bit of home accounting, and little else. In that case, you don't need a massively powerful PC. A simple 386, costing around £500 to £600 should do the trick.

Similarly if you want a PC capable of handling some high-faluting, specialist software — say a massive database, video editing or CAD, for example — you know it's going to cost you a fair whack because you'll need a state-of-the-art machine.

But what about the middle ground? A good PC has to be something that'll do the basics without costing the earth, runs Windows without suffering the PC equivalent of a heart attack and can tackle the latest monster game from the likes of Origin. It also needs to be reliable and 'future-proofed' so that it'll still be able to do this in a couple of years' time without you having to spend a fortune upgrading it.

So, what we've set out to do here is to provide a sensible specification for a home PC, for both leisure and work purposes, and to put to the test some of the most readily available high-street PCs that fall into this category.

To start with, here's what we'd recommend:

- A 25MHz 486SX, or 33MHz 486DX PC

There's no point buying less than this. Most companies are going to stop selling 386s anyway, and a 486 is the only sensible choice to cope with today's software. The 33MHz 486DX is preferable, being the more powerful PC, but there's not that much in it and your choice must be dictated by how much money you want to spend.

- 4Mb of RAM

Realistically, this is the minimum for running Windows applications and the bigger games these days. Extra RAM improves performance considerably, so if you can get a PC that comes with 8Mb of RAM, count your blessings.

- A medium-sized desktop, or midi-tower (upright) casing

The smaller cases may look ever so dinky, but they are a real liability when it comes to adding extra cards or peripherals to the PC. The choice between desktop and tower is entirely personal and usually depends on how much desk space you have.

- A 14" Super VGA colour monitor

This is pretty much the standard by now, and you shouldn't accept anything less. If the PC comes with a 15" monitor, so much the better.

- A mouse and keyboard

These should be included in the price — they're not supposed to be optional extras!

- A 1.44Mb 3.5" floppy disk drive

Again, this should be standard nowadays.

- A 120Mb hard disk drive or greater

Software takes up much more room on average than it did a couple of years ago, so it's important to have as much hard disk space as possible. If you add just a few well known applications and a couple of games you'll soon see that space disappearing at a rapid rate of knots. Put together DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1, Word for Windows 2.0, CorelDraw 3.0, Ultima UnderWorld 2 and Lemmings 2, and you've already kissed goodbye to 70-odd megabytes. Ouch...

(Note that DOS 6.0's DoubleSpace utility is still suffering from the odd technical hitch, particularly with games.)

- Bundled software

Windows 3.1 and DOS 6.0 should be pre-loaded on your PC, and there's no excuse why these shouldn't be included in the overall price. You should also realistically expect some sort of general purpose software bundle with your PC. This is unlikely to be the most powerful stuff available, but it will set you up with perhaps a word processor, a spreadsheet and a DTP package, which will do the job for now. You might also be supplied with a game. Buying software separately can be a very expensive business.

There are obviously a lot of extras you can add to this basic specification, like a sound card or CD-ROM drive, for example. If you can get a PC with these included in the price, so much the better. But make sure you aren't cutting corners on the quality of the actual PC, because sound cards and CD-ROM drives aren't that expensive (from around £89 and £149 respectively) and they aren't that difficult to install by yourself at a later date.

And the price you have to pay for a PC that fits this particular bill? Well, a ceiling of around £1,200 should have it all covered, and in many cases leave you with a fair amount of cash to spare, so that's the limit we've placed on all the PCs we're reviewing later on.

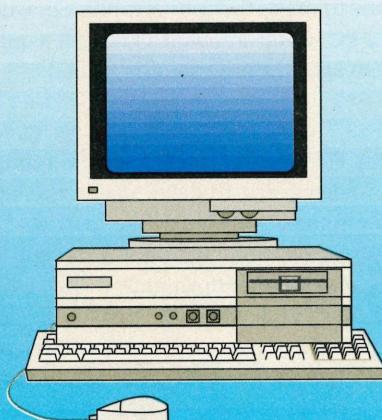
Who do you buy from?

Some people might say that this price limit is too high, that it is in fact easily possible to get PCs to our specification at nearer the £800 than the £1200 mark. This is perfectly true, and although we've chosen six PCs to review, it could just as well have been 60, because there are easily that many out there that fit the specification.

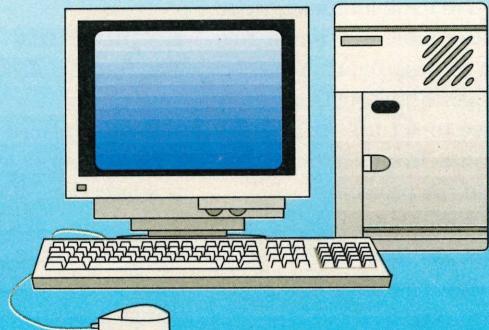
But selling PCs is a cut-throat business, and some manufacturers will cut all sorts of corners if it gives them a better chance to get at the money in your pocket. Look carefully at a 'bargain' PC, because you really do pay for what you get. If someone's offering a 66MHz 486DX with all the trimmings for a ridiculously low price, it's a fair bet that it's not the best made PC the world has ever seen and unlikely to work for very long.

Not only that, but how reliable are some of these suppliers? After all, you can buy your PC from a shop, by mail order or have it custom made from scratch, but in the past year a num-

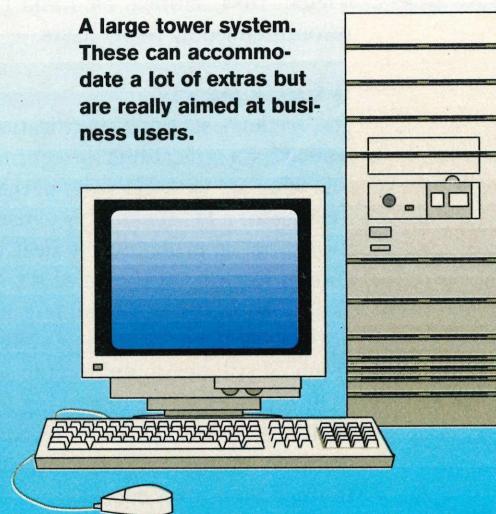
A standard desktop PC. You can also get mini and slimline desktop machines.



A midi-tower system is a simple alternative to a desktop casing.



A large tower system. These can accommodate a lot of extras but are really aimed at business users.



PCs come in all shapes and sizes. A good basic rule is to avoid the really small cases unless you're absolutely pushed for space, because they are very difficult to get inside when you need to, and they are always limited in terms of expansion possibilities.

COVER STORY

The off switch is inconveniently located at the back of the machine

The reset button is awkwardly placed

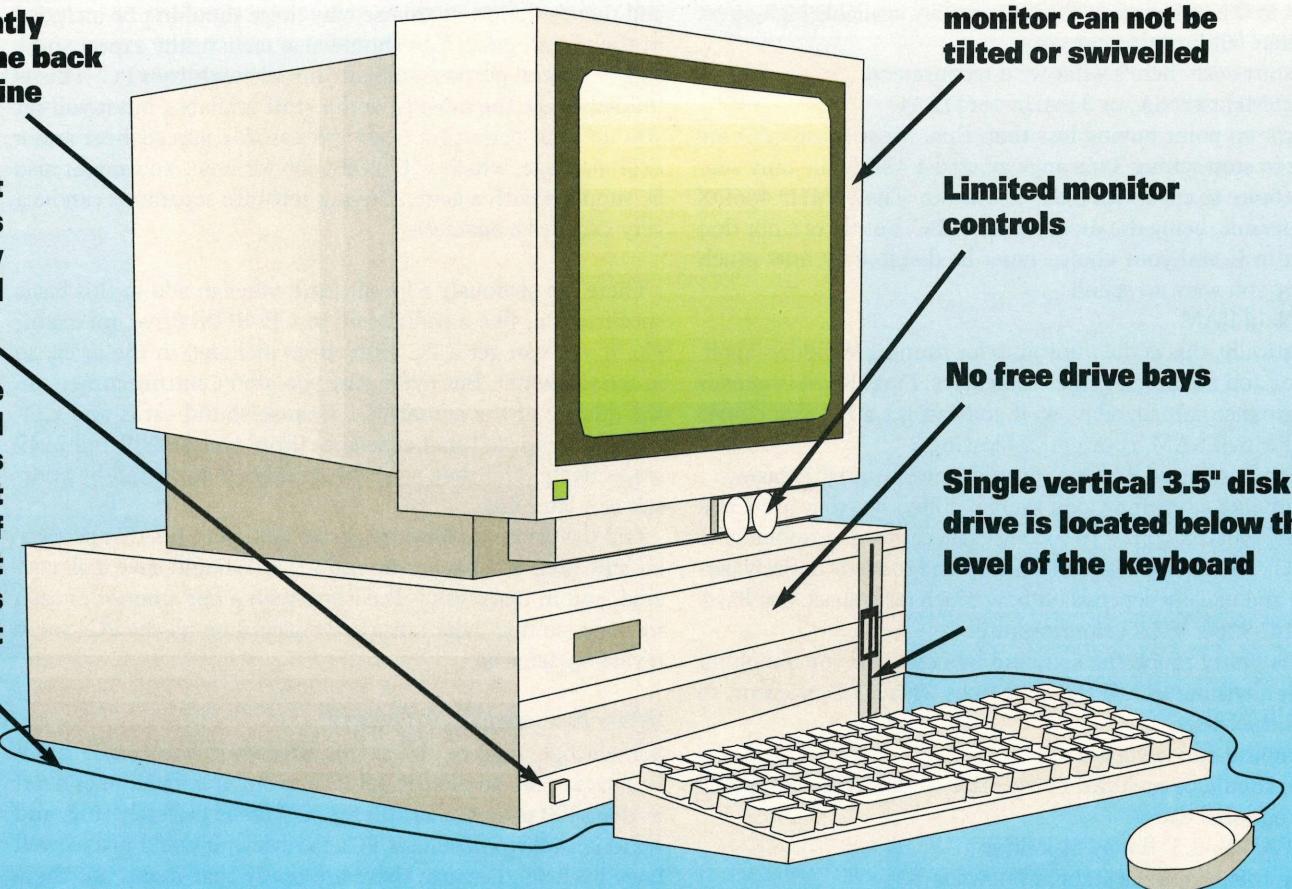
The keyboard socket is located at the back of the PC but the cable is too short

Fixed stand means the monitor can not be tilted or swivelled

Limited monitor controls

No free drive bays

Single vertical 3.5" disk drive is located below the level of the keyboard



How to spot a badly-designed PC

ber of relatively large mail-order suppliers have gone under (such as MJM, Ti'ko and Olympus) leaving people either out of pocket or with a PC and no visible means of support.

There are many perfectly reputable suppliers out there, but if you're not confident that you know exactly what you want, you may not want to buy 'blind'. Hence, we've opted for a range of PCs that are all available in the high street. There are other manufacturers, both direct and retail suppliers, such as Opus, Viglen, IBM, Elonex, Dell and Dan which also come highly recommended by many users.

What's next?

OK, so that's set out a specification and a price range, and here we have six typical high-street machines that fit the bill.

So what are we looking for in them? First and foremost, we're looking for a PC that's easy to use and reliable — "trouble free motoring" is probably the best way to describe it. Your PC should work from the word go, and perform consistently. It should be easy for a complete novice to set up. And, if the unthinkable does happen, it should come from a manufacturer who'll still be around to take care of the problem.

On top of that, we're looking for a well-made, intelligently designed, quick PC that's reasonably 'future-proofed' (ie, it won't be completely obsolete two minutes after you get it through your front door).

Good design does not mean jazzy styling — you're not going to pay £200 more just because a PC has a go-faster stripe down the side or pretty lights (mind you, that's why I bought my hi-fi, but we've all got our cross to bear).

What good design means is that all of the important functions you need to get at are sensibly and clearly placed. What may seem like a minor quirk of the PC's design can turn out to be a real curse when you've been working with it for a while — simple things, like an awkwardly placed disk drive, an on/off switch at the back of the PC, or a fiddly reset button. Put a couple of these together and you've got a PC that'll drive you bananas in no time. For example, we've come across several PCs in the past where the games port is so close to the edge of the panel that it can't take a joystick connector with two screws either side — as most analogue flight sim sticks do — and you have to resort to a hacksaw to make the connector fit. So, when you're looking at buying a PC it's always worth giving it a quick once-over to see if you can spot these sorts of irritations.

Expansion

The internal design of the PC is very important to you in the long run (unless you're never going to delve inside the box) and we've placed a lot of emphasis on this in the reviews.

The chances are you may want to add something to your PC at a later date. It could be related to performance — like a bigger hard disk or a better video card. It could be work-related, like a fax or modem. Maybe it's games or music-related and you need to add a CD-ROM drive or a sound card. All of these things need to be installed inside your PC — and you've got to do it — so the PC has to have enough room inside it.

A good rule of thumb is never to buy too small a PC unless you're absolutely certain that it's got what you want. There's nothing worse than trying to fit a new drive and finding that

you'll never reach the screws under the main plate without an L-shaped screwdriver and triple-jointed fingers.

The larger cases will usually give you more room to expand your PC and to work inside it, but this can still be deceptive. We had one PC in the office recently, a Packard-Bell Legend 486, which had a hidden metal plate welded across the drive bay into which we were trying to install a CD-ROM drive. Why this is, God only knows, but it is the kind of surprise you can well do without.

You can always make a rough estimate from looking at the front of the PC to see how many drive bays appear free, and count the number of metal expansion slot covers at the back of the PC.

Unfortunately, you don't get much chance to poke around inside a PC while standing in your local computer shop so the only way to be sure is to ask the sales assistant for a specification sheet for the PC or to check the details carefully in the advert. What you are looking for is a minimum of at least one free drive bay, and at least three free expansion slots.

Upgrades and performance

Nobody wants a machine that's going to be obsolete, and because computer technology moves on probably quicker than anything else bar the cost of living, it's vital that you can upgrade the PC you buy.

There are two main elements of the PC you will want to upgrade eventually; the RAM and the processor.

RAM is simple (or it ought to be, anyway). To add more RAM you simply buy more SIMMs (Single In-line Memory Modules) and clip them in to the slots on the motherboard. The first thing you need to check about the PC you're going to buy is whether it takes proprietary SIMMs (meaning you can only buy special ones from the manufacturer) or standard SIMMs (so you can shop around for them yourself). The second thing you need to know is how many megabytes you can upgrade the RAM to: 12Mb is a bit sparse, 20Mb is more than enough, and 64Mb is overkill.

On the processor front, you should be able to upgrade a 486 PC all the way to a super-fast 66MHz simply by replacing the

It's all gone horribly wrong ...

The 1979 Sale of Goods Act makes three major distinctions about the state of goods — in this case PCs — being sold:

- The goods should be of merchantable quality
- The goods should fit the purpose they were bought for
- The goods should be as described by the retailer

If something major is wrong with your PC when it arrives, then phone to complain immediately, and follow this up with a written complaint (keep a copy yourself). You'll be entitled to a full refund because the goods aren't of a merchantable quality. But remember — if you accept a repair you may lose your right to a full refund at a later date.

Useful contacts

Consumer's Association (071) 486 5544

Office of Fair Trading (071) 242 2858

or, contact your local office for the following:

Trading Standards Dept

Consumer Advice Centre

Citizens Advice Bureau

Things to do when buying a PC

- Always pay by credit card if at all possible. If that's not possible, then a crossed cheque or cash on delivery is the next best bet.
- Try to find out details of the company's background, and be particularly wary of Post Office box numbers on adverts.
- Some manufacturers are members of a standards organisation which offers you a degree of protection.
- Check the warranty and support arrangements that come with the PC. Find out if the support deal is insured if the supplier goes bust.
- Confirm exactly what you are buying and the price, stating all the details in writing and keep copies.
- Make sure the advertised price includes all of the bits you need
- Check the delivery date

chip. This is partly why we haven't placed so much emphasis on sheer speed in the reviews, because it is a relatively easy and inexpensive job to upgrade your processor if you need a bit more oomph at a later stage. Any PC that doesn't allow you to do this simply isn't worth buying these days.

To make the job of upgrading a chip easier, a Zero Insertion Force (ZIF) socket is a big bonus in a PC. Simply put, it's a levered chip socket that allows you to pull out the existing chip and replace it with a new one. It's about as difficult to use as a Lego set. A Low Insertion Force (LIF, not surprisingly) socket is less common, and not as easy to use. Otherwise, chip extraction and replacement is best left to the manufacturer — which costs money.

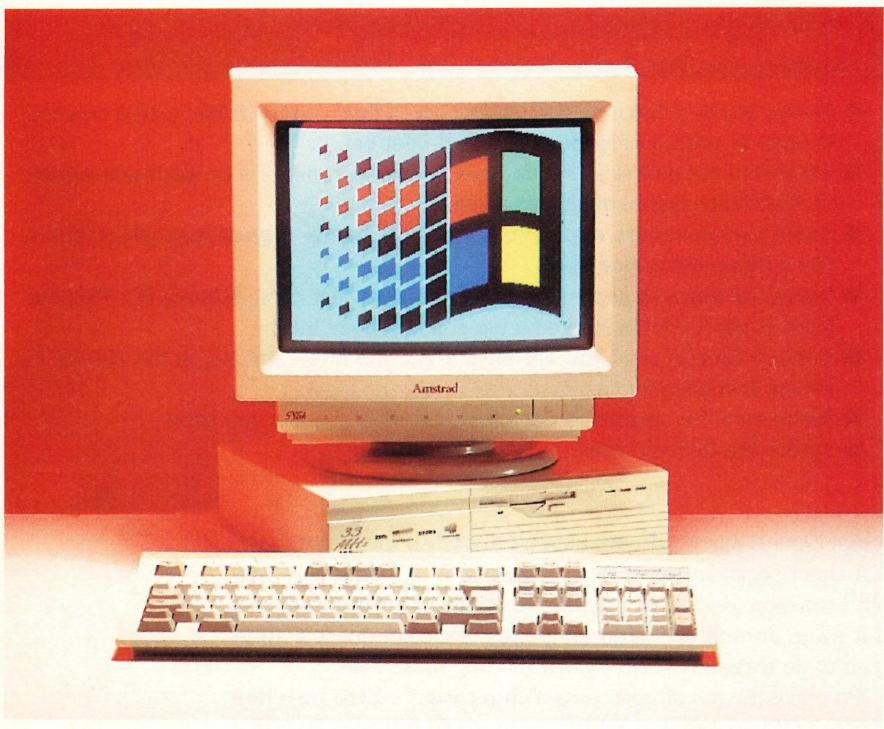
As well as going up to a 66MHz 486 chip, some PCs have the option to upgrade even further to a Pentium OverDrive (P24T) chip. This is a half-way house between a 486 and a full-blown Pentium PC. If you look at a chip socket with this capability, you'll see an extra ring of pin-holes around it waiting for the larger Pentium OverDrive. But, since the P24T won't be around for quite a while yet, you should take this ability with a pinch of salt — there's no guarantee it'll work when the chip does become available.

This brings us finally to the thorny question of PC performance. Obviously, it is important. You don't want to buy a PC only to find that it takes ten minutes to make up its mind when you ask it to do something. But, out and out speed is not the be-all and end-all when it comes to buying a home PC.

For a start, it's very difficult to measure accurately. You'll see umpteen adverts for PCs boasting assorted benchmark speed figures. But, these are often ridiculously misleading. So many factors are involved in the set-up of a PC that practically any set of tests you use will favour one configuration over another. What's more, these tests can rarely be made to represent what you actually intend to do with the PC day in and day out.

This is another reason why in the reviews that follow we've really only commented on a PC's performance (in terms of speed) where it has been either noticeably good or markedly bad. All of the PCs that we have reviewed here should be more than adequately fast when it comes to handling any standard Windows application, and when playing the latest, and the biggest of today's games.

But just for the record, the factors that decide the performance of a PC are: the type of processor (386, 486 or even Pentium), the speed of the processor (measured in megahertz [MHz]), the type of video card, the speed of the hard disk (access times), the amount of RAM, and disk cacheing. And — importantly — prices quoted include Vat.



**33MHz processor,
130Mb hard disk,
2Mb of RAM, 3.5"
disk drive
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Fax (0277) 211
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Price £869.99**

4

impossible to add an internal CD-ROM drive, for example.

Expansion is not quite so bad, but still very limited. By a clever bit of engineering, Amstrad has managed to fit most of the bits on to the motherboard that you'd normally find on expansion boards, thus leaving you a marvellously generous two free slots to play with. Yeah, right. Two slots, and precious little room to work round them. All you have to do is add a sound card, for example, and chances are this will probably obscure the other slot and render it useless.

To add to that there are a few strange quirks of design, like the fact that both the keyboard and the mouse connect into the bottom of the PC. This may seem like a harmless eccentricity, but it actually turns out to be quite a pain in the long run.

But on the whole the Amstrad's performance can only be described as adequate at best. The Cirrus Logic-driven graphics card is a good performer, and, somewhat unusually, the Amstrad is powered by a Cyrix 486 SLC chip (it runs externally at 16-bits — like a 386 — and at 32-bits internally, like a 486) which again produced reasonable results. The problems with running Windows and games are largely because of the lack of RAM — 2Mb just isn't enough to start with any more — and the PC really struggled with the bigger games.

So, if you're seriously considering buying this PC, then it's because you want to have as little to do with it as possible and aren't going to put it under any great strain. Ask it to do something new; dabble with the configuration, add new hardware

or even fairly standard Windows software and the results can be very unpredictable to say the very least.

In its favour though, the Amstrad 486SLC is very cheap and it is very simple to get to grips with. The machine boots up — not into Windows — but to its own, very easy to understand, program manager. It's a simple menu system which allows you to get at all the installed software and a set of online tutorials, and on this score the Amstrad deserves full marks. You also get DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1 and the PFS Windows Works integrated package bundled with the PC, and one year's on-site warranty. In short, the Amstrad is easy to use, good value for money but underpowered and very limited in the upgrade and expansion departments.

**25MHz 486 SX
PC, 100Mb hard
disk, 4Mb of RAM,
3.5" disk drives
Price £1,199
Tel (081) 332
3000**

7

Amstrad PC7486SLC-33

Of all the PCs we looked at this was by far the smallest of the lot. On the neatness side of things this is all well and good, and the Amstrad has a lot going for it if you're pushed for desk-space. However, it does leave you absolutely stuffed when it comes to upgrading it in the future and adding useful extras.

This makes it rather difficult to take a machine like this seriously as a PC, since the potential is so limited. Free drive bays are non-existent — so it's

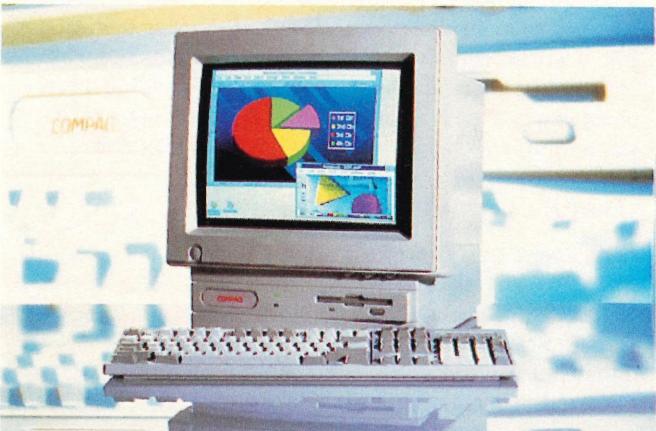
Presario 486SX/25 is its design, which puts the entire thing, monitor and all, in one box. If you want to be cynical, someone at Compaq has obviously decided to take a few leaves out of Apple's book, because that's what the Presario resembles most closely in style and finishing.

That in itself is meant as a compliment, and there's no denying it's a rather attractive machine. But, the main aim is to provide a full-function, no-compromises PC that can sit unobtrusively on a desk with the minimum of cables, and in this respect the Presario is a qualified success.

On one hand, it is extremely well-made, with a very crisp display from the built-in monitor, an energy saving power-down feature and compliance with EEC rulings on PC health and safety. It's also a good performer (again using the Cirrus Logic graphics chip), and the processor can be upgraded to a 66MHz DX2 chip and RAM to 20Mb.

It is also very easy to use. Compaq has really gone to town on this, combining on-line tutorials (the naffly-named 'Compaq welcome centre' and a built in teaching game to show you how to use the system. Add to that DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1, and ClarisWorks (an integrated package), Mario is Missing and Compaq GrandSlam Tennis, and it makes an impressive bundle for first-timebuyers.

However, the 100Mb hard disk drive is the bare minimum we'd recommend, and since the monitor and the system box are



Three of the most exceptional Space Simulations ever!



all one unit — in fact the whole thing will arrive on your doorstep in a single box — there are a couple of other drawbacks. Firstly, you can't tilt or swivel the display, and secondly, the Presario is as limited as the Amstrad in terms of its expansion possibilities with only two free expansion slots and no free drive bays (which effectively rules out an internal CD-ROM drive).

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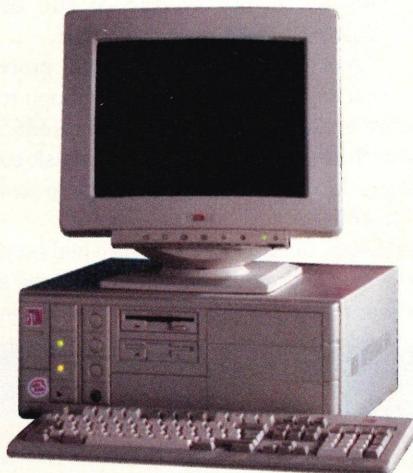
6

Escom 486 33/DX

Escom is Germany's second largest high-street PC manufacturer, and the company has set up in the UK over the past couple of months.

The Escom is a solid (that's putting it mildly), well-made and functionally designed PC. It may not be particularly attractive, but there's very little to cause irritation when you're using it regularly. The only niggles are the rather basic positioning controls for the monitor, a manky feel to the keyboard, and a very strange dummy blank disk drive in the front of the PC.

As PCs go, this one's maybe taking the 'big is beautiful' idea a bit too far — it really is a tank. But although this means that it needs plenty of desk space, it has the advantage that it gives you ample room to expand the system with six 16-bit expansion slots and three free drive bays. This should provide more than enough room for the future.



That could prove to be vital because the Escom 486 is altogether a rather average performer, and certainly nothing special for a 33MHz 486DX. But then it does get the job done, it has a whopping great 240Mb hard disk, and we've had absolutely no problems with it running both games and Windows applications.

Both Windows 3.1 and DOS 6.0 are pre-loaded on the PC, which comes

with a one year return to base warranty and 90-days free hotline support. There's nothing that makes this machine particularly easy to use — no on-line tutorials and the like — and there's no software bundle, but this is offset by the inclusion of a 16-bit sound card and a nifty set of speakers complete with obligatory matt-black stands.

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sound card
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6

Evesham Micros Vale Popular

Like the Escom, the Evesham Vale is a solid if uninspiring 486 based machine, a ready-to-go multimedia package fitted with a sound card and CD-ROM drive as standard.

The Evesham is a hefty desktop machine, rivalling the Escom for the coveted 'tank of the year' award. The rather ordinary front panel sports the reset and turbo buttons and there is one vertically-mounted 3.5" disk drive and the CD-ROM drive while the monitor supports 1,280 x 1,024 resolution.

Inside there's a lot of fresh air, with the power supply and cards dwarfed by the size of the casing. Although the case is roomy there's a lot of messy cabling which hides and restricts access to the SIMM sockets. But if you can get to the

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COVER STORY



SIMM, there are four free slots that allow you an immense amount of room for memory expansion.

Despite this sloppy finishing, the expansion potential is good and the Evesham has ample room; one free horizontal 5.25" drive bay and five empty expansion slots. Although there's plenty of room to get at the three free full-length slots, the two half slots are almost impossible to reach due to the jumbled mass of I/O cabling.

Neat and tidy are two words that don't spring to mind about the Evesham. Apart from the tangled cables, there are supposed to be two vertical bars, included to give the case some rigidity. Unfortunately one of these was missing and the other was loose, and I suspect if it had been fixed it would almost certainly have restricted access to the last expansion slot.

But as it is the Evesham performs quite well and since it's been sitting in the office it has coped with the likes of Privateer, Return to Zork and The 7th Guest. The hard disk is painfully slow at times and the machine has crashed a few times under Windows, but for no reason I can safely put my finger on.

All in all, the Evesham is an average machine that doesn't really excel at anything. It boasts a large case that it really never takes full advantage of, but comes complete with DOS 6, Windows 3.1, and Star Trek 25th Anniversary pre-installed plus various CD-ROM programs. Buying an Evesham also gets you a one year on-site warranty and access to the Evesham technical support hotline.



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disk drive
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8

Gateway 486SX/33

Gateway is new in the UK, having just arrived from the States where the company is the largest direct-seller of PCs. It looks like we're about to be saturated with a vast array of Gateway PCs.

This may not be such a bad thing though, as the PCs are certainly very competitively priced and the 33MHz 486SX ranks as one of the best designed and finished PC here.

A 33MHz SX is an unusual processor to offer, and in all likelihood it is

largely for pricing reasons, because all it amounts to is a 386DX minus the co-processor. Still that and the local-bus disk controller do give the Gateway 486/33SX a significant edge in power over equivalent 25MHz 486s.

As we said, the PC is distinctively styled and finished on the outside, and the same is true of the internal workings. Like the Amstrad, Gateway has opted to put a lot of the gubbins you

Checklist for buying a PC

Item	Comments and options	Recommended	Item	Comments and options	Recommended
Basic spec					
Compatibility	Is it a 100 per cent IBM-compatible PC? (This doesn't mean you have to buy from IBM.)	IBM compatible	Processor	To 66MHz or Pentium OverDrive	To 66MHz
Processor	286, 386 or 486 (SX or DX)	486SX or DX	Expansion	Slots for adapter cards for video, scanners, faxes, etc.	Min 3 free
Speed	20, 25, 33, 40, 50 or 66MHz	25 or 33MHz	Drive bays	Free space to fit extra floppy or CD-ROM drives, etc	Min 1 free
Hard disk size	How much in megabytes (Mb)? The amount of room on the PC to store your files.	120Mb	RAM upgrades	Increase memory with standard SIMMs	SIMMs up to 16Mb
RAM	Also in megabytes, this is memory that is faster for software to access which improves performance.	4Mb	Upgradability		
Floppy drive	3.5", 5.25" or both	3.5"	Processor	To 66MHz or Pentium OverDrive	To 66MHz
Monitor	EGA, mono VGA, VGA or SVGA. Monitors come in a range of sizes, from 7" mini screens to 21" monsters and larger.	14" Super VGA	Expansion	Slots for adapter cards for video, scanners, faxes, etc.	Min 3 free
Should be included in the price					
Mouse Keyboard Windows 3.1 DOS 6.0 Other bundled software					
Warranty options					
On site Return to base Free telephone support					

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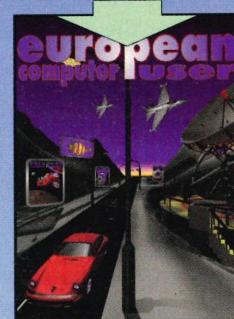
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normally find on expansion cards directly on to the motherboard. This means that inside it's a very clean and uncluttered layout, certainly the best of these machines, with masses of room; five free expansion slots, although two of them are a little cramped, and one free drive bay. Credit must also be given for the processor upgrade facilities with a ZIF socket and a Pentium OverDrive option.

The only irritation is that the monitor, which is extremely good in terms of both clarity and controls, is let down by the fact that it needs its own power cable and won't run from the PC power supply. Not a brilliant state of affairs, but hardly critical.

The keyboard is also a bit of an oddity: it includes extra keys for scrolling diagonally and two sets of function keys so you can program them with simple macros.

Other than that, this PC makes a very good value for money all-round PC. Support seems to be better than average, with a lifetime freephone support hotline, one year return to base warranty and 30-day money-back guarantee. Bundled software includes DOS and Windows, QA Plus (diagnostics) and Microsoft Works.

Virgin EuroMagnetics series-E PC

Richard Branson and Virgin have launched themselves into the PC market with a media-grabbing 'green' PC. But the green tag is the only thing that gives this average machine any real interest.

The standard Virgin E-series PC itself is reasonably slim affair, while the monitor is much bulkier. Inside there isn't much in the way of space and as a result the machine only has three horizontal expansion slots. However, all I/O ports (serial and parallel) and even the graphics chip are mounted on the motherboard.

The machine performs fairly well although there is nothing about it that is worth getting up and shouting about. The 486 processor sits in a L16 socket — the manufacturer maintains that it is P24T compatible — and the whole package comes with Dos 6 and Windows 3.1 pre-installed. You also get a box of pre-formatted Virgin disks, the Virgin mouse mat and a software-based disk cache utility called FAST.

As for its 'green-ness', Virgin claims that the E-series uses 65 per cent less power than standard PCs with typical power consumption when idle a mere 40 watts compared to up to 200 watts in non-green PCs. The 14" IBM-produced colour monitor is notable for its power-down capability which reduces output down to an impressive six watts. Finally, this deep shade of 'green' has been achieved by reducing CFC use to a minimum and shipping the PC in both recycled and environmentally friendly packaging.



Putting the boot in

Take the strain out of setting up a PC for games. Gail Robinson explains how DOS 6 can make configuring your computer much more straightforward

Games software needs more hardware resources than ever before. In fact, you could find yourself turning your machine's configuration upside down just to get the darned things to run. Take the new Microsoft Flight Simulator 5, for instance. This incorporates no special video effects and quite basic sound effects, yet it's still resource-hungry and refuses even to install, let alone run, if you have less than 530K of conventional memory free, and expanded or extended memory available.

A PC optimised for game playing won't be optimised for running applications or Windows 3.1. OK, you could reconfigure your PC every time you want to switch from one to the other, but it's a pain. Luckily, there are ways round this thorny problem using some of the features found in MS-DOS 6.

The best place to start is with the MEM command so you can see how your memory is being used currently. Simply type in MEM at the DOS prompt and you should see a black and white table something like the diagram on the opposite page.

This is just a summary of memory use. To get more detailed information of what programs are in memory, type

MEM/C/P

Armed with this information, you could manually adjust your Config.sys and Autoexec.bat files, loading programs into upper memory. But there is a much better way to do this, because MemMaker can do these chores automatically. This utility scans your Config.sys and Autoexec.bat files, moving drivers and TSR (Terminate and Stay Resident) programs into upper memory. You can only do this if you have a 386SX or better.

There are a couple of ways to run MemMaker: express set-up goes away and optimises memory for you, or custom set-up gives you some control over the changes.

Custom set-up presents you with a set of questions on how you want the memory optimised. For example, it asks you

which drivers and TSR you want to tweak and if you want to scan the upper memory area aggressively.

MemMaker then optimises your memory use. It's foolproof too: if the utility does something your machine doesn't like, it offers to go back to your original memory set-up. In our test machine, it managed to reclaim an extra 27,328 bytes from conventional memory – not bad for two minutes work.

There's more tweaking you can do to squeeze extra RAM. For example, you could also load DOS high by editing the DOS=UMB command in your Config.sys file so that it reads:

DOS=HIGH,UMB

Other things to look out for include checking your Config.sys file to see if it has the stacks statement. By default, stacks will consume 2K of memory and you could reclaim that by adding:

STACKS=0,0

to your Config.sys.

Another Config.sys line you should pay attention to is buffers. If you're using Smartdrv, this statement is largely irrelevant and you can set it to 10 or less.

More than one way to skin a cat

Traditionally, gamesters could use a clean system boot floppy to make sure that there's maximum memory free to run games. DOS 6 has a couple of more elegant solutions.

The first is dead easy to use. As your PC boots up, you'll see a message "Starting MS-DOS": you'll need fast reactions for this next bit. You've got two seconds or so to press F5 or F8. Why would you want to do this? F8 enables you to step through your Config.sys file and choose which lines you want to load. So you could choose not to load all those RAM-gobbling files in your Config.sys to leave the maximum free memory. The upgrade to DOS 6, version 6.2, offers you the chance to step through your Autoexec.bat file as well. By pressing the F5 key, you can bypass the Config.sys and Autoexec.bat files completely

Putting Config.sys to work

With DOS 6.0 it's possible to set up multiple configuration files for the PC. Here, we have two examples of what's needed in the Config.sys for a games set-up and for a more standard Windows configuration.

GAMES

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE NOEMS
DEVICEHIGH=C:\DOS\DBLSPACE.SYS /MOVE
DOS=UMB,HIGH
FILES=40
BUFFERS=10
```

WINDOWS

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE NOEMS
DOS=UMB,HIGH
FILES=40
BUFFERS=10
COUNTRY=044,,C:\DOS\COUNTRY.SYS
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\ /P
DEVICEHIGH=C:\DOS\DBLSPACE.SYS /MOVE
LASTDRIVE=Z
STACKS=9,256
```

PC memory

Trying to figure out your base, EMS and XMS memory? Type MEM to get a breakdown of your system memory something like this table.

Memory Type	Total	=	Used	+	Free
Conventional Upper Adapter RAM/ROM Extended (XMS)	640K 87K 128K 3241K		43K 87K 128K 2217K		597K 0K 0K 1024K
Total memory	4096K		2475K		1621K
Total Under 1 Mb	727K		130K		597K
Total Expanded (EMS) Free Expanded (EMS)			1024K (1048576 bytes) 1024K (1048576 bytes)		
Largest executable program size Largest free upper memory block			579K (611168 bytes) 0K (0 bytes)		
MS-DOS is resident in the high memory area.					

- the equivalent of booting from a clean system floppy.

A more complex solution, which might help those who don't have nifty fingers, is to set up multiple configuration files, by creating a Config.sys file that looks something like this:

[MENU]

This tells your PC you're about to create a menu of options.

MENUITEM=WINDOWS

MENUITEM=GAMES

These are the names of your two different configuration files: you can call them anything you want. I've called one Windows and it's going to load up all the files I need to run Windows and its applications. The other will be for games use and will load the bare minimum in to memory.

STACKS=9,256

Above is the configuration information I need to load Windows stored under the [WINDOWS] menu option. All I've done is copy my original Config.sys, which I know runs Windows perfectly well and has already been optimised by MemMaker, and pasted in to our new multi-configuration Config.sys.

And this is the abbreviated games configuration file, which just takes the files I can't live without. Make sure you keep the file that loads any disk compression software - in my case it's MS-DOS 6's own DoubleSpace, HImem.sys the extended memory manager and EMM386 the expanded memory manager.

Save this file as Config.sys (renaming your old Config.sys file something sensible like Config.old so that you can go back to it if things go wrong). Reboot your machine and you'll see a menu pop up offering you two options - in my case option 1 is the Windows set up and option 2 is games. Just type in the appropriate number and your Config.sys file of choice is loaded.

The root of the problem

The first IBM PC used the Intel 8088 processor which can address 1Mb of memory, which in 1981 terms was a lot of RAM. It was never imagined that applications could ever want more memory than this. Of this 1Mb, IBM allocated 384K to adapter ROMs (like the video and hard disk controller), leaving a massive 640K for applications. Adapter ROMs are found on things like the video card and hard disk controller. No matter what PC you've got, these fundamental limitations apply.



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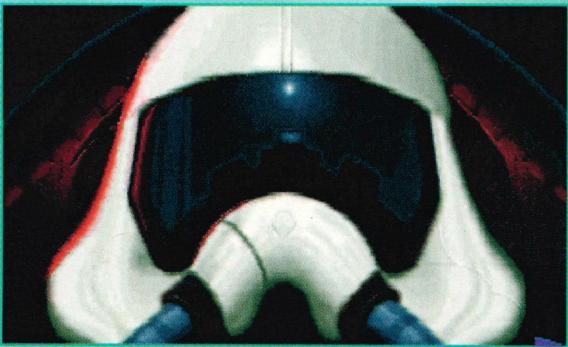
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Call Sign: JAWS

Age: 26

Payroll Number: KP8843321XR

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Special Skills:

Stealth/Covert Operations

Current Status: Active

Health: A1

Previous Contracts:

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Current Contract:

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Rate: \$ 5000 per day

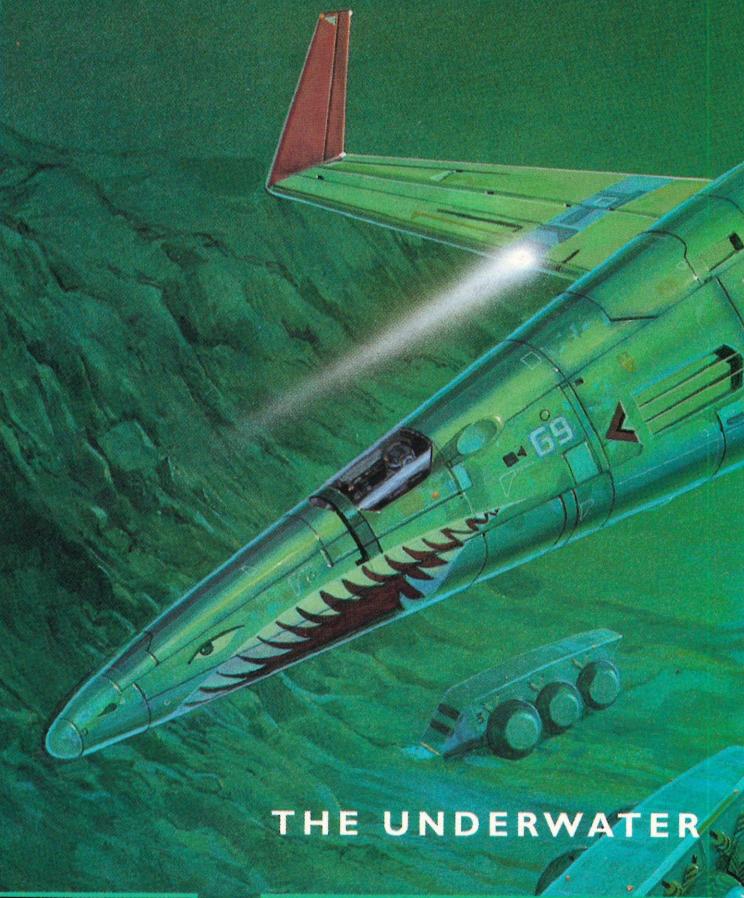
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Lead the X3 team of unmarked Tornado Class subs from Carrier Dauntless on stealth patrol and reconnaissance of border territory between McKinley 205 and GomPol 555.

SUB 20

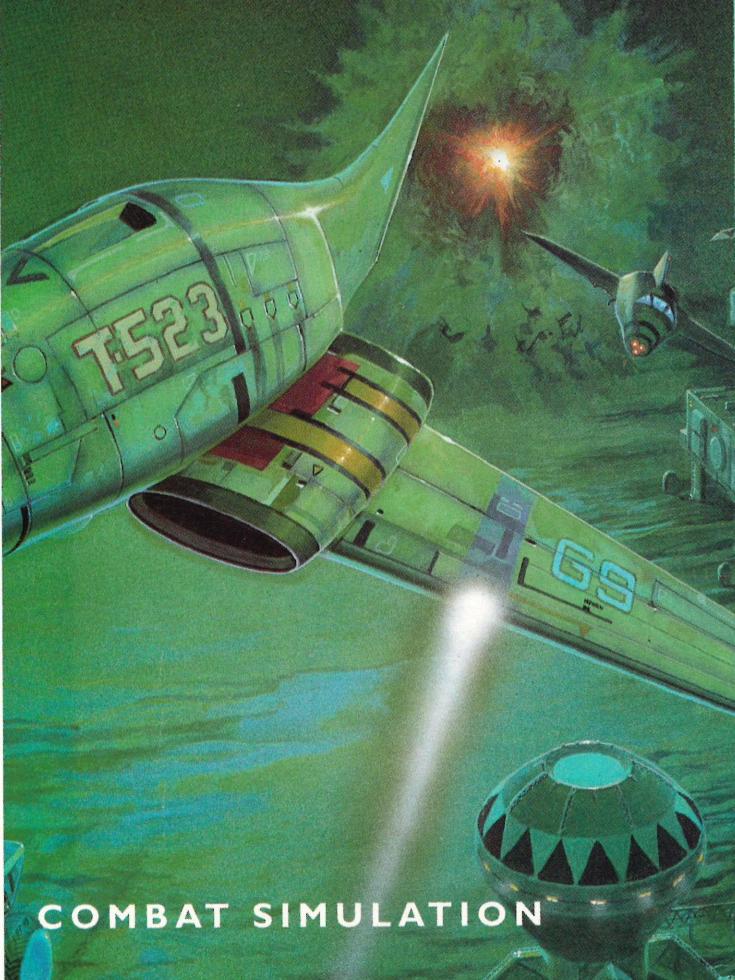


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WAR 50



COMBAT SIMULATION

It is the year 2050. In the search for vital mineral resources, undersea mining has become commonplace.

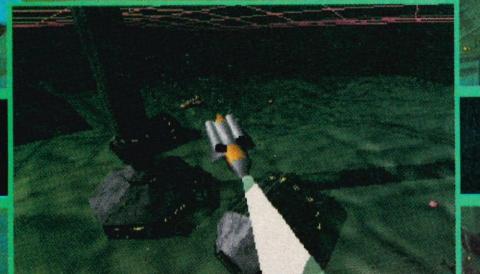
The companies who own these mines are powerful. There are regular conflicts between them and they use the latest underwater technology to defeat competitors. The most effective of these machines are the fighter submarines.

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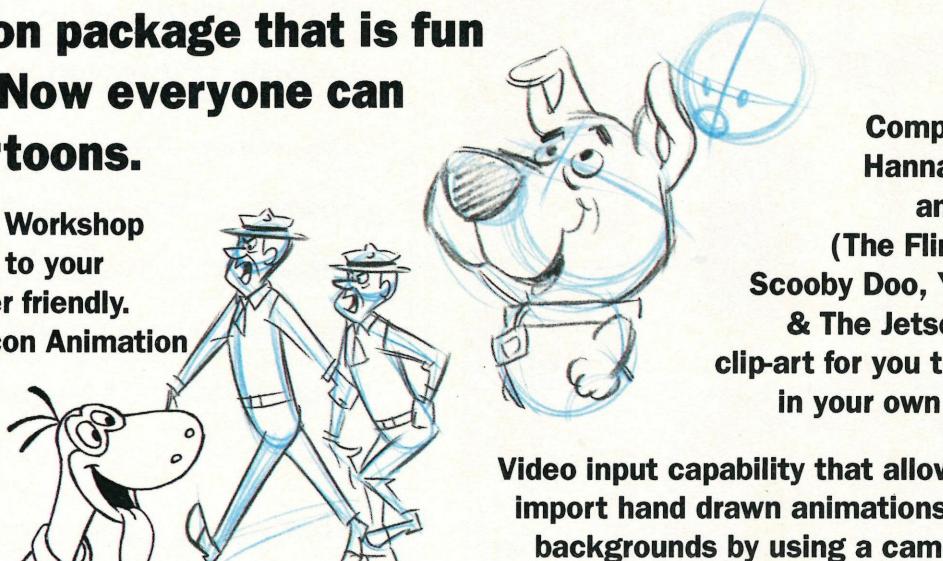
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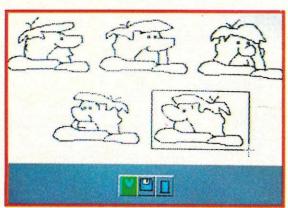
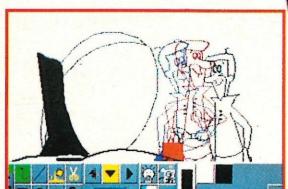
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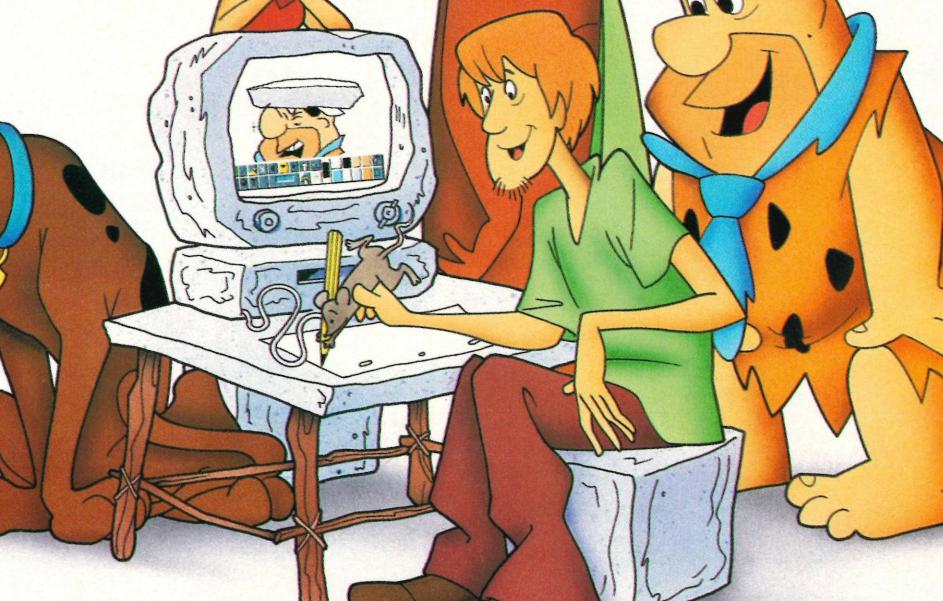
Contains features that the professional animator couldn't do without such as onion-skinning for careful positioning of frames and an adjustable exposure sheet so that you can get the timing just right!



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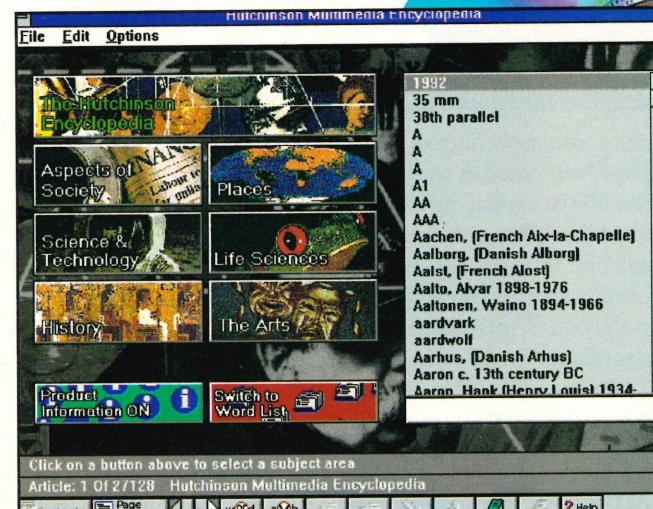
With a multimedia encyclopaedia, you can not only read the articles, but see related pictures and videos, and listen to speech and music. Christina Erskine tries out four contenders with the multimedia touch

Encyclopaedias, CD-ROM and multimedia could have been made for each other. The 600Mb storage capacity of a CD-ROM means that just about the only thing that will fill it up with ease is a gigantic database, and the computer is good at poring through hundreds of megabytes of data for repeating patterns, making textual searches quick and comprehensive. The multimedia aspect to the program neatly answers the question, "What's the point of putting it on disk when it made a perfectly acceptable book?" How much more interesting the book would be if instead of reading about Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon, with a grainy picture, you could see the video of him emerging from Apollo 11, and hear his words in his own voice.

A clichéd way of explaining just how much information can be stored on a digital compact disc is to say that you could put the whole of the Encyclopaedia Britannica on just one of them. We may not have the Encyclopaedia Britannica here, but we do have four rivals for your money and thirst for knowledge.

The four programs we compared were The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia, the latest updated version, Hutchinson's Multimedia Encyclopaedia, Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia, and Microsoft's Encarta.

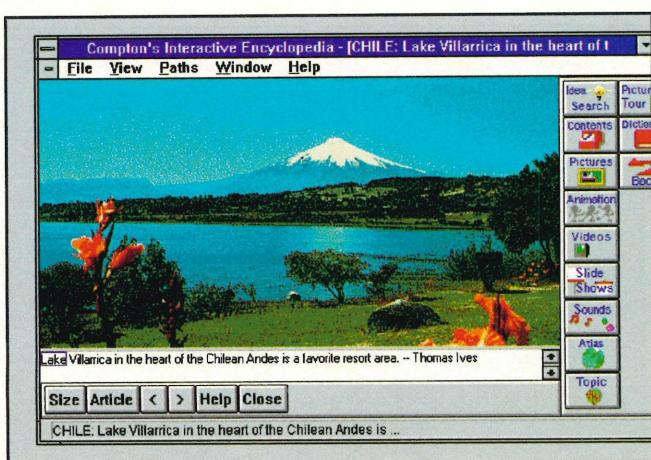
One advantage of the CD encyclopaedia over a book-based version is that rather than arranging material either strictly



alphabetically, or topic by topic, the CD program can do both. In practice, 'browsing' through a list of 30,000-odd article headings is pretty tedious. It's simpler to find the item you require either by accessing its topic and then moving down the sub-categories, or by entering a salient word or phrase and finding the article from the ensuing word search.

Looking up the cross-references on a CD program is quicker than with a book as well. Rather than thumbing through hundreds of pages from one end of the alphabet to the other, all you need do on CD is click on the cross-referenced word and it will take only as long as the access time.

When testing the programs, we looked for two things above others: firstly, that style hadn't been sacrificed to content: that there was still plenty of information on as diverse a set of topics as you could reasonably wish for in an easy to access format, and, secondly, that there was indeed some style: that the multimedia aspect made the program more interesting and more enlightening than a book-bound equivalent.

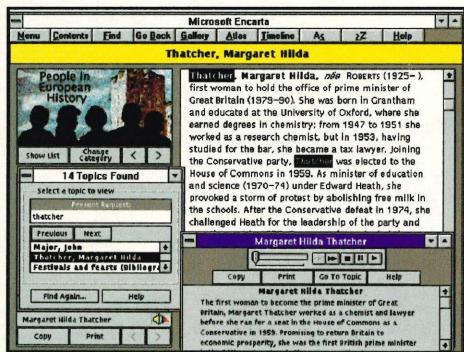
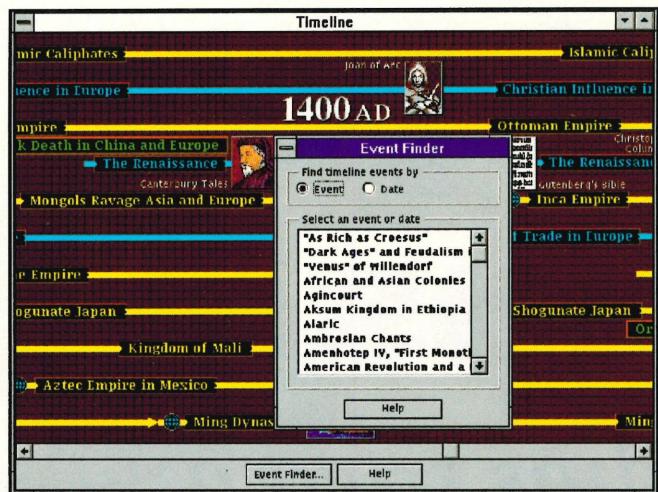


Above: Hutchinson's Multimedia Encyclopedia's opening menu, showing the top level of the topic tree. **Left:** Lake Villarrica in central Chile, brought to you by Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia.

FEATURES

Right: Encarta's Timeline feature portrays various events in history in a linear chart. Click on the icons to bring up a list of related articles.

Below: Encarta is impressively rich in visual and audio accompaniments. This audio play screen pops up when you click on the audio play icon.



In order to do this, we selected a number of topics, some standard and some a little more obscure, to look up in each encyclopaedia, and compared the amount and diversity of information in each. Because Encarta, Compton's Interactive, and the New Grolier were all developed in the US, we also specifically looked up American Football and Association Football, and Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, to check how skewed these three programs were towards the mother country.

However, you can use the encyclopaedias for more than just browsing or looking up information. All the programs we looked at here include facilities to copy text to a file or on-screen 'notebook', for later editing and use in word processing programs, or to print out entries and pictures. The Encarta manual, in particular, goes into some detail about using the program to research and write reports.

Microsoft Encarta

£235

Contact Microsoft (0734) 270001
Runs under Windows

Right: In Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia, the camera icon shows that a related picture can be called up; the icon below it indicates that a related entry can be cross-referenced.

Below right: Compton's also has plenty of video clips, which, although rather small, are mostly appealing.

Of the four products here, Encarta is undoubtedly the best presented. The screens remain clear and uncluttered even though the article screens contain not only the text but also a quarter screen picture of the subject – where one exists – and a graphic showing the current topic. While it's as easy as any other method to look up subjects using the general word search, the information can also be accessed under nine topic headings. The search is reasonably quick and in the subjects we looked up, the articles were rich in pictures and audio snippets. For example, under Popular Music, there are 15 musical extracts (some also appear under other headings: the bars of Argentine popular music are also played under Latin-American music, for instance) and three photographs (David Bowie, Michael Jackson and a picture of a guitar); under Chile, the country, nine pictures showing the landscape, people and architecture.

Moving around Encarta is intuitive and flexible, ie, there are a number of ways of accessing the same information, and everything works by clicking the related labelled button, or clicking highlighted text.

One particularly interesting feature is the language section of the Gallery, where 46 world languages can be called up and

you can hear simple words like 'yes', 'no' the typical greeting and a proverb spoken in the language by choosing each phrase from a pictorial map. However, I have some reservations here: English and American English are differentiated, but the former speaker has a distinctly mid-Atlantic twang, and one of his phrases is, "My name is Csanad", which is not, to my knowledge, an English name borne by anyone. This is a US-developed product and it shows: plenty on American football, no mention of any European soccer clubs, although Pele gets his biography in (he played for New York Cosmos for a while, you see) and there is a spectacular picture of the Olympic football stadium in Munich – captioned, "a soccer field". Enough said.

Still, it's a highly polished program, extensively cross-referenced, and the sheer number of audio/visual extras lifts reading screeds of screen text into a fascinating process.

Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia

Compton's NewMedia, £354.49

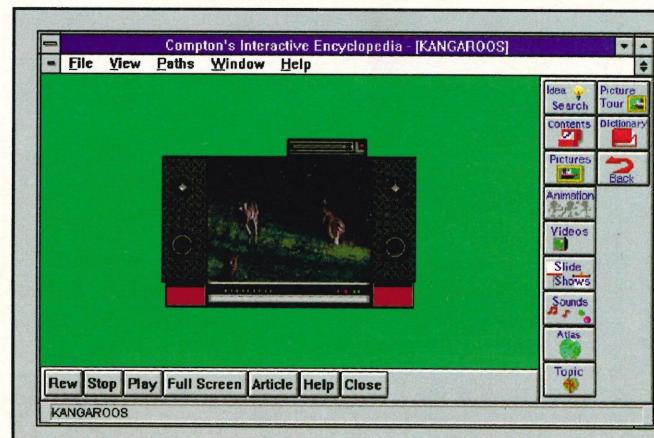
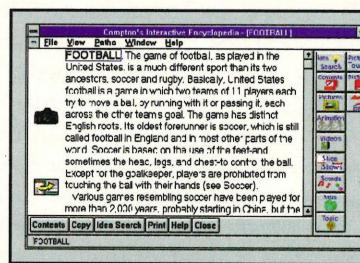
Contact Active Distribution (081) 838 1280
Runs under Windows

Similar to Encarta in the breadth of subjects covered – the top level of the topic tree alone divides entries according to 19 subjects – and companion features (like Encarta, it has an atlas and a 'timeline': events in history shown in linear chart form), Compton's also has a dictionary, 120 video clips (in a minuscule screen window) and animations, as well as speech, 'sounds', such as a cat purring, or volcano erupting, and still pictures to accompany the text. As an all-rounder then, it scores highly.

Also like Encarta, Compton's is unashamedly American in origin. Reagan gets a picture, Thatcher doesn't; American footballers are lovingly illustrated, Pele is the only soccer player deemed to be worth a mention.

It's a shame that the videos are so small on the screen, because some of them are rather lovely to look at, but the pictures, on the whole, are of variable quality. A beautiful shot of Lake Villarrica in the Andes accompanies Chile (see page 51), but the picture of Crater Lake in Oregon – a not dissimilar type of shot – is a dreadful blur. On another subject, the Live Aid picture under Popular Music is unrecognisable.

Compton's dealt with PC Review's selected topics (see panel overleaf) competently. It differentiated between French, Italian and English truffles (so we learned something new there, at least!); its Gothic novel entry was exhaustive

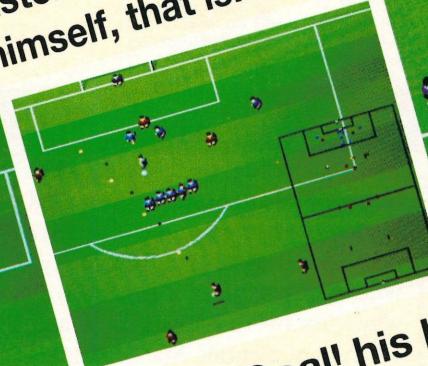




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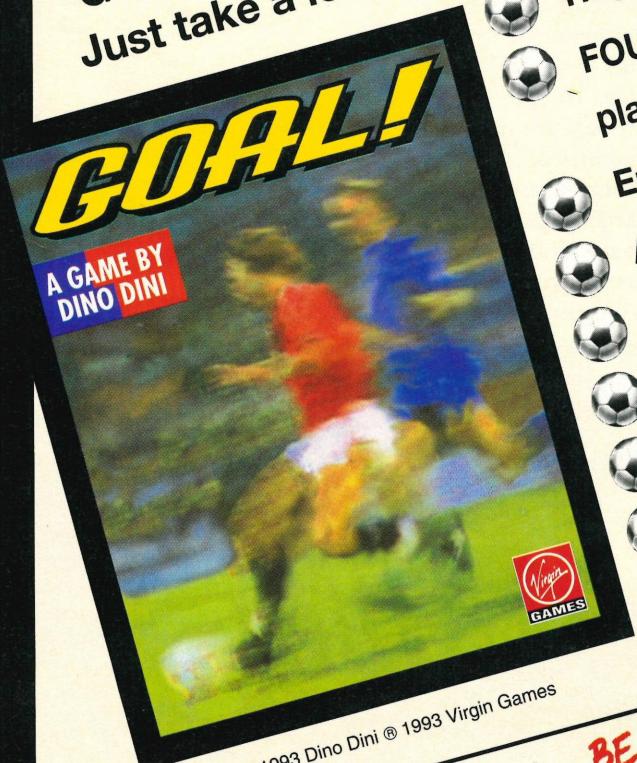
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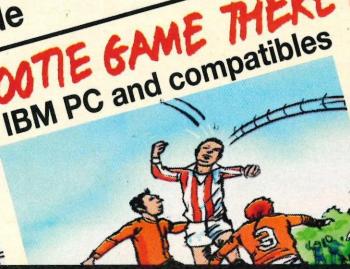


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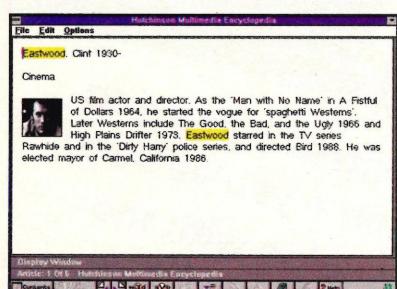
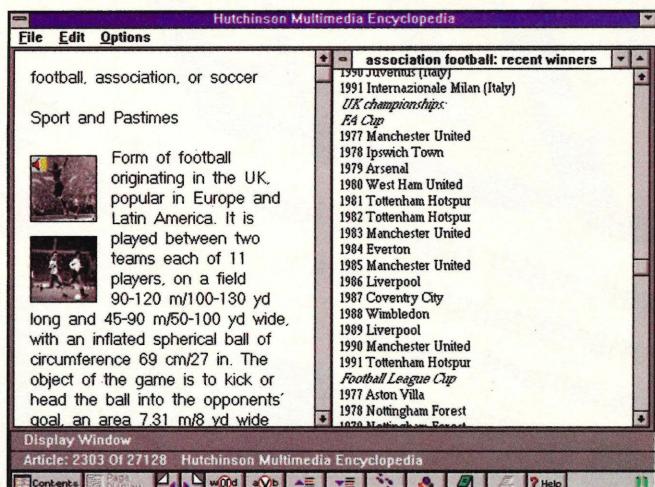
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FEATURES

Right: Hutchinson's Multimedia Encyclopedia at least treats our national game rather seriously.

Below: Brief and to the point, this is all Hutchinson's can find to say about Clint Eastwood.



— and surprising, since it managed to include Oscar Wilde, Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens as all strongly influenced by the genre. On classic cars, absolutely everyone who ever produced a fast motor is listed, which meant that Compton's was the only program to mention Maserati. It was refreshingly plain-speaking about the arrival of punk under Popular Music, dismissing it as "very loud 70s music".

I liked Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia. It's very easy to browse through quickly, with intuitive menu buttons on the right of the screen, and it has at least as broad a reach as Encarta, and even more in the way of animation and video, although with some items the quality isn't as high or as polished. Also, the detail of entries seems inconsistent: some subjects you thought might be obscure get more treatment than more obvious topics.

Hutchinson Multimedia Encyclopedia

PEP Associates, £149.99

Contact FOS-CD, (0296) 682233

Runs under Windows

By now, the control interface for CD-ROM encyclopedias is looking like a standard. You have an index of entries, which no-one in their right mind would go through to find an individual item, since they're around 30,000 entries long. Rather, you use the word search or move down the topics tree until you've isolated the exact subject you want.

Hutchinson's topic tree starts at the top level with six subjects: aspects of society, science and technology, history, places, life sciences and the arts. However, one aspect of the topic layout had me confused for a while. At one point I was poleaxed to find a word search on 'Thatcher' yielded only two matches — and this is the British-originated program — until I realised I

was hunting within 'the arts', which explained just about everything. Later on, I found Geoffrey Howe delivering his cricketing analogy in his resignation speech to the House of Commons in one of the audio clips, but seemingly no cross-reference to the woman who had taken the stumps away. This turned out to be because Howe is filed under History, and Thatcher under Aspects of Society. I suppose it doesn't really matter, but it did cause the odd glitch when browsing through the program.

The menu bar is less intuitive than either Encarta's or Compton's. It does not have a timeline chart, nor an atlas — although maps are provided with most countries with a caption bar set across the screen and obliterating part of the image.

In general, Hutchinson's covers much the same ground as the others but the detail is sparser, although we managed to access all our selected topics, but found the material in most was briefer. Still, it did list the signs of the zodiac (Grolier, surprisingly, didn't), and it was the only one of the four to give a name-check to the intrepid Victorian explorer, Isabella Bird.

Developed by PEP Associates in Cambridge, Hutchinson's scored well on the Anglo-American balance, not surprisingly. British, and indeed, European politics gets much more space than American political activity, and when you find yourself scrolling through a list of Scottish FA Cup winners from 1977 onwards, you know the program's been developed in the UK.

Hutchinson's multimedia aspects include still pictures and audio clips: musical snatches and speech. No video or animations. As with the textual material, the feeling persists that there are slightly fewer of the visual/audio extras than in the other three programs.

New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia

Software Toolworks, £293.95

Contact (0444) 246333

Runs under DOS

As the only DOS-based program in this collection, the Grolier's text-based articles look dull compared to the others, which is a shame, because there is a vast amount packed in here.

Grolier scored best in the selection of people we chose to look up as guinea pigs for the review. In fact, it's strong all-round on biographies of people; we found more individuals being cross-referenced with their own separate entries as we trawled through the



Tested topics

The subjects (right) were specifically looked up and followed through on each of the encyclopedias. They were chosen more or less at random, but also attempted to embrace a range of subjects (history, geography, science, etc) and we also chose topics about which at least one person at PC Review knew something about, so that we would have some idea as to whether the information in the program was up to the mark. The subjects were: classic cars; horoscopes and astrology; pop music, particularly of the 70s; Chile; Victorian travellers and exploration; the Gothic novel; science fiction; and truffles (I can't remember who came up with 'truffles', and I certainly can't remember why).

other selected topics than were included in the other programs. For an American program, it also did well in our US vs Rest of the World test. While Ronald Reagan is mentioned in 159 entries to Margaret Thatcher's 16 (and has a much more flattering picture), it does at least take our national game seriously. Six European footballers have their own biographies and there is a complete table of World Cup winners. Incidentally, Grolier was the only one of the encyclopedias to point out that Pele is not only the name of "the greatest of all footballers", but also of a Polynesian goddess.

The program also contains still pictures, video clips, maps and sound. The maps are very good in comparison to the other programs with more details. The accompanying country outlines and fact boxes list information in more tabular form than the commentaries of the other programs, which makes it perhaps easier to spot the required information, but less accessible to read. The videos, pictures and audio are, like Compton's, rather variable: very good when good, unrecognisable in some instances.

I reckon Grolier probably holds more sheer information than the others - those DOS text files should be smaller, after all - which may make it better for those who want a serious reference tool rather than an interesting browse. But the limitations of its presentation make it comparatively heavy-going: you'd be more likely to use it because you need to, not because you want to.

What's in a name?

We asked each program to find references to a number of famous or significant people, some more so than others, from a range of walks of life and periods in history, in an attempt to see how comprehensive the encyclopedias were.

Key

- ♥ = mentioned under another heading
- ♣ = given their own separate biography
- ♦ = biography contains a picture as well

Hutchinson's	Compton's	Encarta	Grolier
Genghis Khan (ca1167-1227) Mongol warlord whose hordes conquered much of Asia	♥ ♣	♥ ♣ ♦	♥ ♣
Vasco da Gama (ca1460-1524) Portuguese explorer, the first to sail around Africa	♥ ♣	♥ ♣ ♦	♥ ♣ ♦ ♦
Rosalind Franklin (1920-1958) Member of the team which went on to discover DNA (and who scandalously didn't win the Nobel Prize)	♥ ♣	♥ ♣	♥ ♣
Mark Clark (1896-1984) US general who came to prominence in the Korean War	♥	♥ ♣	♥ ♣
Toni Morrison Nobel Prize for Literature winner in 1993, not to be confused with ...	♥	♥ ♣	♥ ♣
Van Morrison Irish singer-songwriter	×	×	♥ ♣
Pele Brazilian footballer, the best in the world	♥ ♣	♥ ♣ ♦	♥ ♣ ♦ ♦

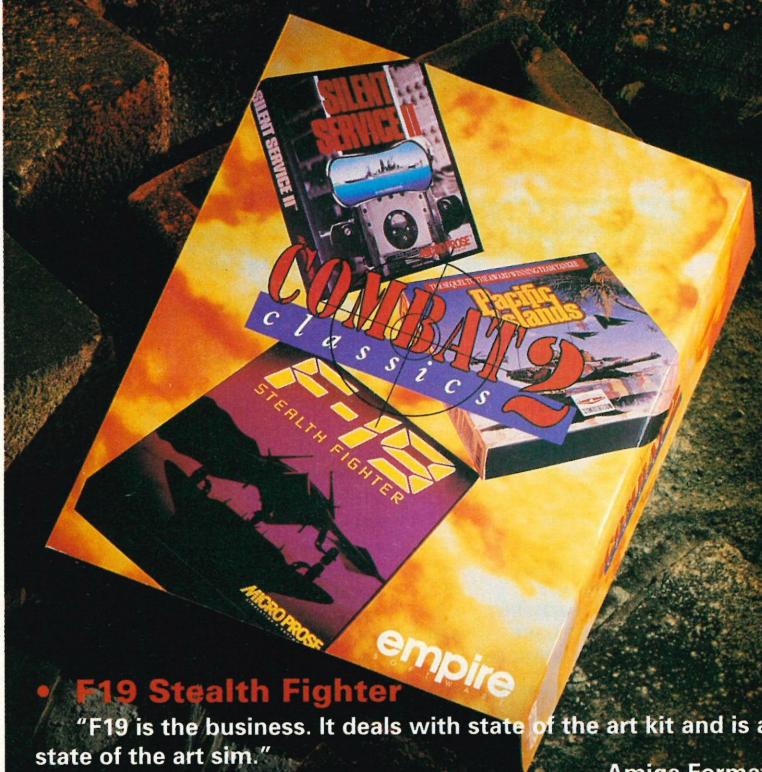
* Hutchinson's 'biographies' can be very short indeed: Rosalind Franklin gets all of two lines, Toni Morrison three, while Van Morrison and M C Escher tie on four lines each.

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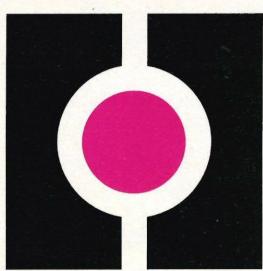
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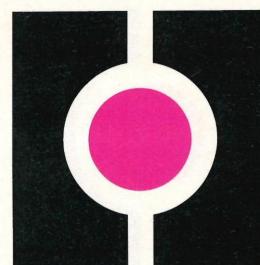
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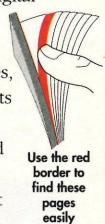
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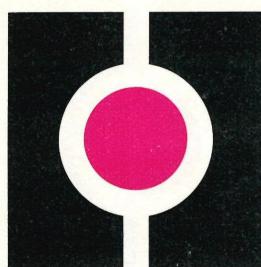
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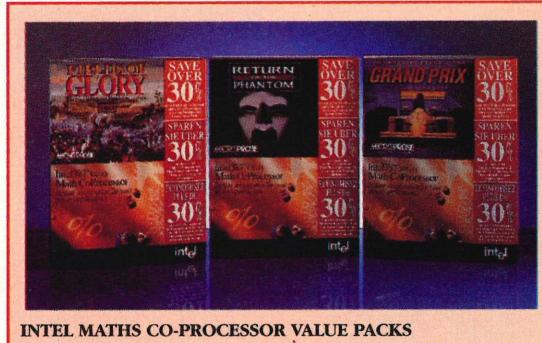
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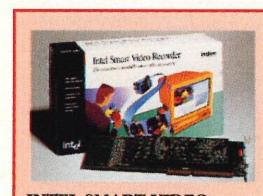
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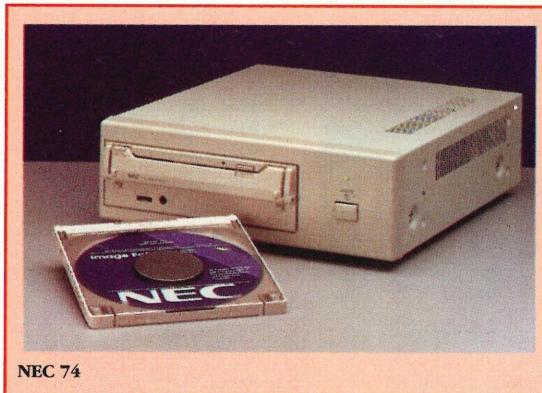
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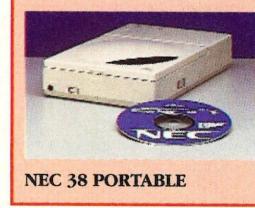
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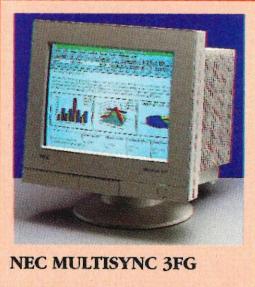
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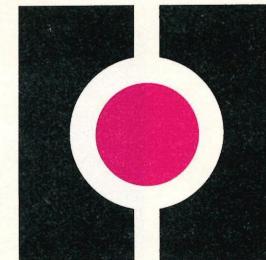
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inside

The CD-ROM drive

Compact discs are now familiar to everyone, but the technology behind the drives and shiny discs is far from simple. Mike James reflects ...

The CD-ROM drive is beautifully simple in theory, but when you actually discover what it takes to make it work it's even more amazing. The basic idea works on the principle that a laser beam is shone on to a reflective disk. As the disk spins, pits in the surface of the disk deflect the laser beam and consequently make it flash on and off. A detector picks up the flashing and converts it into the familiar on/off binary code that all computer data is recorded in.

The first thing to say is that the laser used is not a Star Wars-style burn-through-metal machine but a small laser Light Emitting Diode (LED). The LED only produces a small amount of light but, being a laser, there still have to be warnings about not looking directly into it. The reason a laser is needed at all is that the spot of light that hits the spinning disk has to be as small as possible to pick up the individual pits.

The design of the optics is also difficult because it has to move from the edge to the centre of the disk as it reads data. To enable the head to move fast it has to be light and compact. In most cases a small prism is used as a beam splitter to deflect the return beam to the detector.

There are also additional detectors that keep the head on track and in focus. All of this is mounted on a small plate which can be moved by a motor from the centre to the edge of the disc. The faster the head assembly can be moved the better. The time to move it halfway across the disk is known as the "average access time" and it can be as long as half a second for a slow drive.

The compact disc is made of a very clear polycarbonate plastic and pits are moulded into the top side. The top side is subsequently covered by a layer of reflective metal and the label is printed on top of that.

Although the pits are on the top side of the disc, it is actually read by shining the laser beam on the bottom. Scratches and dirt on the bottom of the disc can make it difficult or impossible to read the data.

To make this less likely, CD-ROM drives have some of the most sophisticated error correction electronics in use. They can reconstruct missing data from a damaged area without you knowing anything about it.

Of course, if too much data is lost it cannot be reconstructed. What this means in practice is that the effect of a scratch on the surface of the disc depends on where it is. A scratch along the radius of a CD-ROM is far less damaging than one that runs parallel to the circumference. A radial scratch only obliterates little blocks of data over the drive surface but a scratch that follows the line of the data recording destroys large blocks which cannot be reconstructed. This is the reason you are always advised to clean CD-ROM discs using a wiping motion from the centre out rather than round and round.

The pits in the disc are so small that you could get 25 or so across the diameter of a human hair. This means that as well as permanent scratches, dust is a serious problem. A dust particle can easily block out a significant number of pits. Again, so long as not too much data is lost in this way it can be reconstructed by the error correction circuitry.

Even so, some CD-ROM drives go to great lengths to keep the disc clean. Special 'caddies' or trays are often used to hold the discs while they are in the drive. When a caddy isn't used, filtered air currents are created to keep the surface of the disk

CD-ROM facts

- A typical CD-ROM disc contains close to three billion pits. Each pit is so small that only 500 hydrogen atoms could fit across its diameter. It can hold up to 680Mb of data — equivalent to 500 3.5" floppy disks. The single spiral track is about three miles long and its coils are packed together to give about 16,000 tracks to the inch.

- CD-ROM drives can usually play audio compact discs, so you can listen to music while you work at your PC. The converse does not hold true, however: you can't play 7th Guest on the Sony Discman!

- Although storing a program on a single CD-ROM obviously saves hard disk space, many CD-ROM games also use the hard disk for install programs, saved games and overlay files.

the PC

dust free. Of course this only works while the disc is in the drive — what happens to it at other times is up to you! So make sure you store your CD discs cleanly and safely.

The data on a CD-ROM is written as a single continuous spiral — from the centre to the edge of the disc. This means that the head can start from the centre and read all of the data in a continuous stream to the outside.

The only problem is that when a disc spins at a constant rate the outer edge of the disk is actually moving faster than the centre. This means that the head can read the data from the outer edge of the disc faster than it can from the centre. And this creates problems of its own.

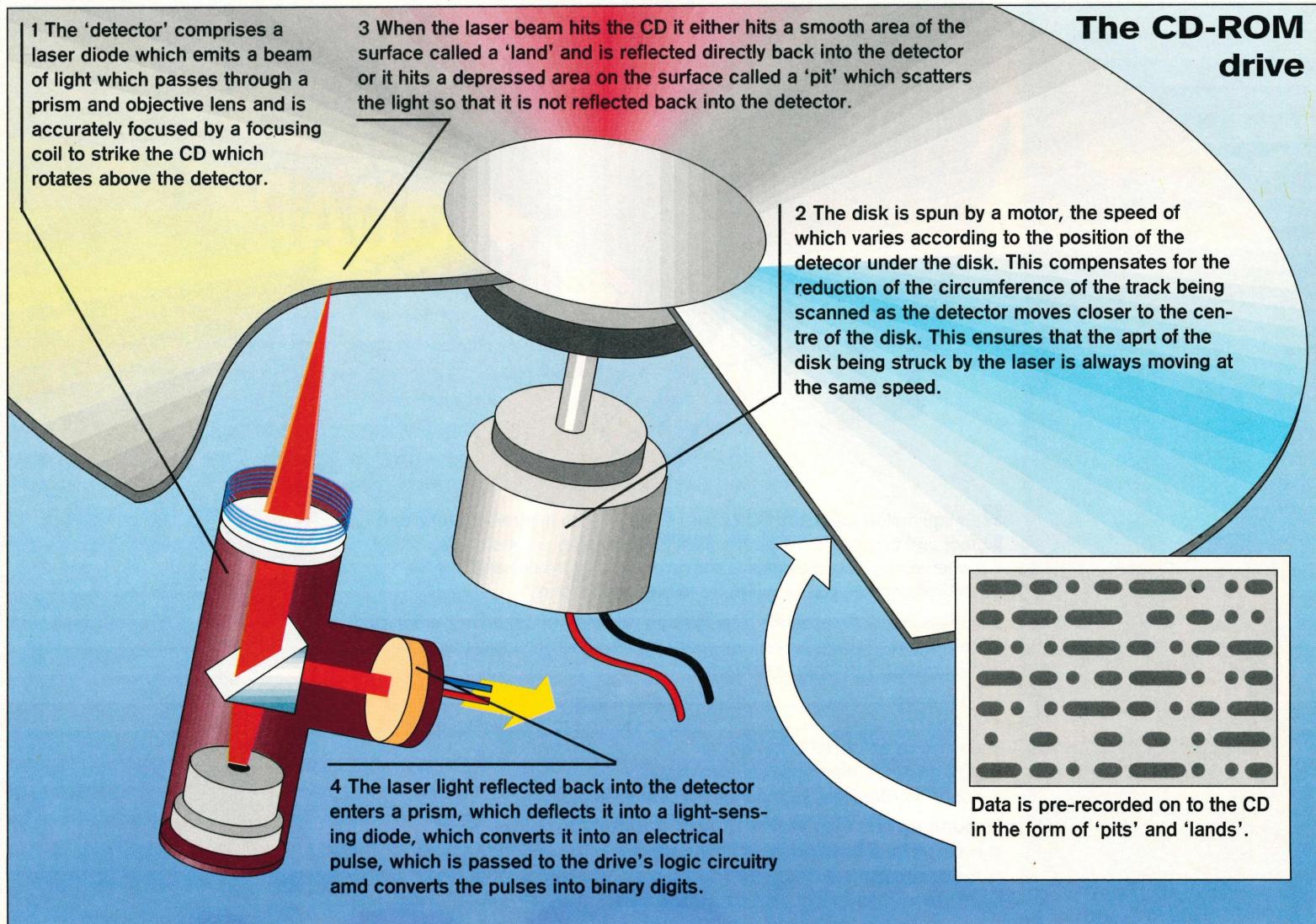
In an audio compact disc this would result in the music speeding up as the disc was played. So to keep the data rate constant it is essential that the speed of the motor spinning the disc is

varied according to the head's position. This varies from 500rpm when the head is in the centre to 200rpm when it is at the outside edge of the disc.

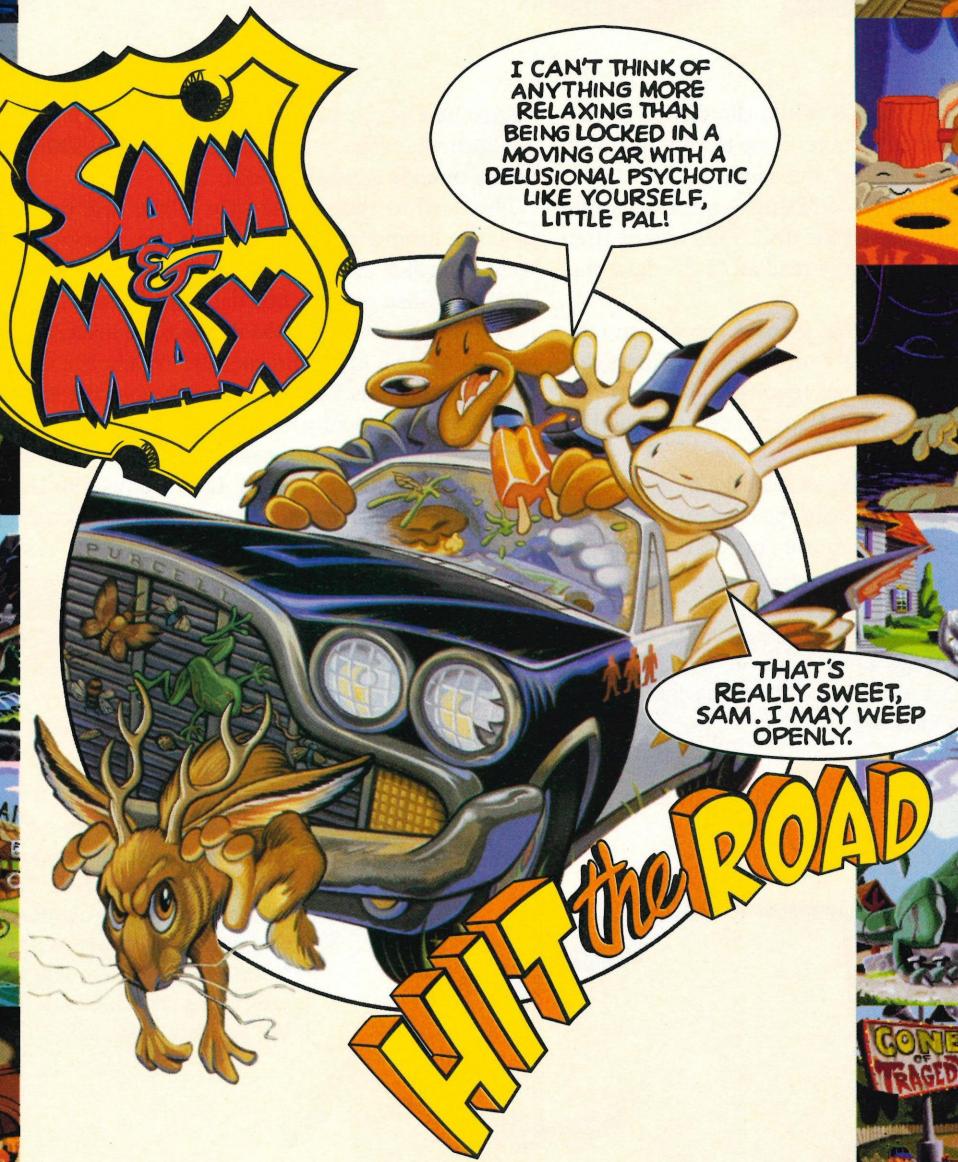
The need to change the spin of the disc to keep its speed over the head constant is actually a nuisance when it comes to reading data as opposed to audio signals. This handicap sets an upper limit on how fast data can be read from a disc.

The very latest CD-ROM drives have overcome this limitation by using a dual spin method. When the drive is reading pure data it spins twice as fast as it does when reading audio data. You can actually hear the drive speeding up and slowing down as it encounters areas of data and audio signal.

There is no doubt, though, that the need to stay completely compatible with audio CD standards still compromises CD-ROM performance.



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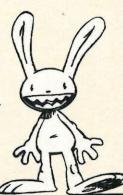
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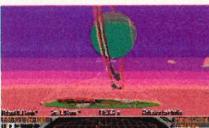
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REVIEWS INDEX

Our comprehensive reviews service starts here. Over the next 64 pages, you'll find the best in games, CD-ROM titles and budget releases appraised and dissected in PC Review's inimitable style, as detailed below

Two Minutes of trading places

You haven't exactly had the best start in life. Working in a fish processing plant on a distant planet isn't much of an existence, so when you inherit a spaceship and 100 credits from your grandfather, Commander Jameson, it seems like a dream come true.



This is where it begins: Sirecco base on Merlin, a moon circling the gas giant Astar in the Ross 154 system. Merlin is a cold, inhospitable world, hence the domes covering the city. The sooner you get away from here, the better. Or so you think.



All you have at this stage is a rather basic Eagle fighter and 100 credits to start your business empire. Merlin is a cold, inhospitable world, hence the domes covering the city. The sooner you get away from here, the better. Or so you think.



Now it's off to the stock-market to get your pound of flesh. That's about all you can afford with only 100 credits, but I guess you have to start somewhere. When you've stocked up, find a system whose prime import is meat and plot a course there.



Before you leave, you must get permission to launch. If you forget to do that you'll get hit by a big fin, and if you fail to pay your fine you'll get hit by an even bigger laser. Once you're safely in orbit, an hyperspace button fly.

TWO MINUTES

This is the closest you'll come to seeing the game in action. We take a series of manoeuvres from the game and explain, step by step, the play required to get through the screens. Not only will you get a flavour of the gameplay, but you may even find some helpful hints in this section!

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Alternatively...



Privateer
Origin, £49.99
Rated 5, Issue 26
Origin's answer to Elite, Privateer is a space trading game with similar style graphics and combat to the Wing Commander series. There are about 25 missions. If you can actually find them, but for the most part it involves an awful lot of aimless wandering. It has infinitely less depth than Elite, let alone Frontier, and the combat is inferior to X-Wing. Rather disappointing in all.



Space Legends
Empire, £34.99
Reviewed Issue 22
Three classic space games have been included in this value for money pack: Elite Plus, Wing Commander, and the futuristic role-playing game, Megatraveller. Elite Plus has aged very well, and if you haven't played it yet, you might want to try it before graduating to Frontier. Wing Commander is more combat oriented, but remains good fun, and Megatraveller is entertaining stuff.

ALTERNATIVELY

We believe games should be placed in context. You may like the sound of game Y, but suspect it might be too technical, or difficult to control. We'll tell you about other games of a similar style, or subject matter, which may be more to your taste (or warn you off those which are inferior to the game being reviewed).

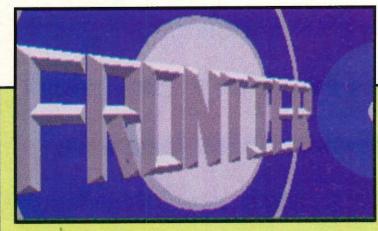
TECHSPEC

Detailed and easy to read at-a-glance, this panel will tell you if the game is suitable for your PC. Note that a cross in the SVGA column means that no specific SVGA version is available (use VGA instead), and that the optimum speed rating is a PCR recommendation, not a manufacturer's stated minimum.

RATING

0-2 Dreadful	6-7 Good
3-4 Deficient	8-9 Excellent
5 Average	10 Perfect





Title Frontier: Elite 2
Publisher Gametek
Contact (0753) 553445
Price £39.99

It's been five years in the making, but now Frontier is finally here. The obvious question is, has it been worth the wait?

Frontier: Elite 2

Whenever anyone mentions space games, you can almost guarantee that Elite is the first game which springs to mind. Whilst many games have been labelled 'classic', this is one game which has truly earned the accolade. It first appeared on the BBC micro back in 1984, before making its way on to a host of other formats including the PC. In its most recent incarnation, Elite Plus, the black and white wireframe graphics of the original BBC version had been replaced by filled

polygons in full colour VGA, and it even supported sound cards.

All this is convincing testament to Elite's longevity and overall excellence. Shrines to David Braben have been erected in many a darkened back bedroom, and it is here that the acolytes gather round and chant mantras such as, "I remember the time I escaped from Witch Space by wiping out all the Thargoids with only a pulse laser," and, "What about that mission when I blew up the space station and got promoted to Archangel?" Ah yes, those were the days.

But all good things must come to an end, and once you've flown all the missions, kitted out your Cobra spaceship with the best equipment available and attained the coveted rank of Elite, there really isn't a lot left for you to do. Marvellous game that it is, even David Braben has to admit that it is, in the long-term anyway, a bit limited. You can't upgrade to a better ship, missions are few and far between, and it isn't possible to land on planets either. These are just a few of the requests which have consistently cropped up on Elite players' wish



Working in a fish processing plant on a distant planet isn't much of an existence, so when you inherit a spaceship and 100 credits from your grandfather, Commander Jameson, it seems like a dream come true.



This is where it begins: Sirocco base on Merlin, a moon circling the gas giant Aster in the Ross 154 system. Merlin is a cold, inhospitable world, hence the domes covering the city. The sooner you get away from here, the better. Or so you think.

lists, and so David Braben has given us Frontier - Elite 2, which incorporates all these features, plus more besides.

First let me start by saying that, despite being a huge fan of the original, I am not going to let that cloud my judgement. In fact, I was more than a little apprehensive about reviewing Frontier because although Elite was, is, and always will be a great game, the genre has come on a long way since then. Frontier has been in development since 1988 and I couldn't help wondering if it had moved with the times, or whether it remained bogged down in the past. When a game has been so eagerly anticipated for so long, expectations are going to be unrealistically high, and the danger is that unless the game is as near as damn it perfect, some people are likely to be disappointed. Still, let's just say that, prior to seeing the game, I was hoping this wouldn't be the case.

Career paths in space

Frontier works along the same principles as Elite. In Elite, the idea was to buy goods in one place and then sell at a profit somewhere else. Profits could be used to upgrade your ship, adding extra cargo space, installing defence measures such as ECMs or escape capsules and, of



course, buying bigger weapons. As a trader you're always at risk from pirates (and alien Thargoids, for that matter) so the more hardware you bolt on to your ship, the better chance you have of surviving. And then there's the small matter of bounties. You get paid for every pirate you kill, and you also get a certain number of points which go towards improving your ranking. The lowest ranking is harmless; the highest (as if you couldn't work it out for yourself) is elite. And that's it, in a nutshell.

Frontier enables you to do all these things, but unlike Elite, you're not simply limited to trading, piracy and bounty hunting. Whenever you land at

a space station or on a planet, you can log in to a bulletin board and pick up jobs or missions, providing that you are suitably equipped to carry them out. Initially you'll have to do a bit of trading in order to build up your cash, but beyond that, you can specialise as much as you like. You could, for example, set yourself up as a sort of intergalactic taxi service, ferrying passengers and packages from one system to another. Packages don't take up any room, but if you want to carry passengers, you'll have to install some cabins, and these eat into your cargo space like crazy.

Alternatively, you could become a miner by purchasing a mining laser, blowing up asteroids and then collecting the debris in your fuel scoop to sell on the stock-market. Once you've got a large enough ship, you might want to go as far as buy-

The graphics are so much more detailed than in Elite. As well as the texture-mapping, notice the serial number, decals, port and starboard lights and even landing gear on this Cobra Mk III.

Some rules still apply. Just sit in front of a space station, open up and then pick off the police Vipers as they come pouring out of the dock. Nostalgia, huh?

Two Minutes of trading places



All you have at this stage is a rather basic Eagle fighter and 100 credits to start your business empire with. Your initial aim is to make money by trading, so it's a good idea to find out Merlin's major exports. Meat seems like a good bet.

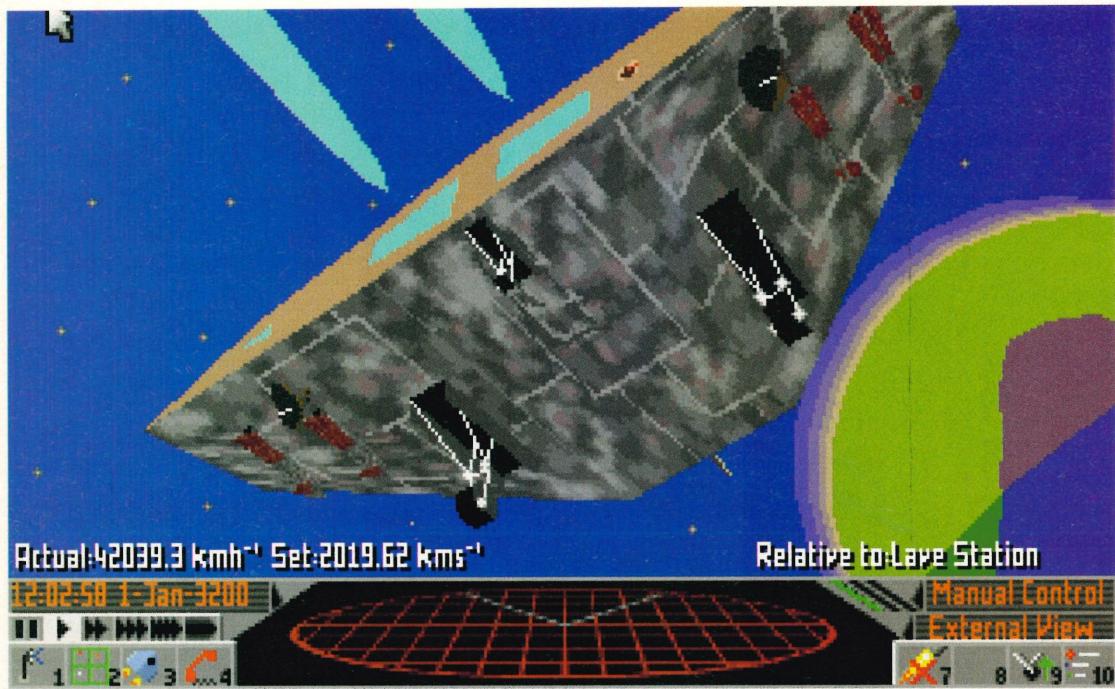


Now it's off to the stock-market to get your pound of flesh. That's about all you can afford with only 100 credits, but I guess you have to start somewhere. When you've stocked up, find a system whose primary import is meat and plot a course there.



Before you leave, you must get permission to launch. If you forget to do that you'll get hit with a big fine, and if you fail to pay your fine you'll get hit by an even bigger laser. Once you're safely in orbit, hit that hyperspace button fly.

REVIEWS



It's difficult to get used to the idea of wheels on spacecraft, but there you go. Here I've just taken off from Lave Station and am busy enjoying the view.

Bottom right: The shipyard is where you buy ships (funny, that) or upgrade the one you've got with all sorts of fancy hardware.

ing a mining rig which you deposit on a rocky moon or planet, leave for a while and then collect later. However, since the moons and planets in the inhabited sectors are pretty much mined out, you'll have to travel a long way before you'll find somewhere worth exploiting. It isn't the most exciting way of earning a living, but it's one of the most lucrative.

If it's excitement you want, however, you could do worse than join the military. The Frontier galaxy is ruled by two super-powers, the Federation (Blake's 7 fans please note: these are the good guys) and the unscrupulous, slave-trading Empire. During the game, the two powers are engaged in a cold war, so there are plenty of opportunities for spying or carrying out assassinations. Whichever side you choose, you'll have to prove your worth

by starting out with simpler, less dangerous missions such as carrying messages or small components from one military base to another. Once you take on military work you'll be given a rank which increases as you complete missions satisfactorily. Of course, if you mess things up, either by failing to complete a mission or by being consistently late, you run the risk of being demoted. The higher your rank, the more complex and dangerous the missions you'll be offered.

Whatever your chosen vocation, you'll need to find an appropriate ship. You can still fly the trusty old Cobra Mk III of the original game, but with 30 different ships at your disposal, why not try something a bit different? If you aim to earn your keep as an assassin, for example, a single crew fighter would be ideal, but you'll have to fork out for something a lot larger if you want to get serious about trading.

Which brings me neatly on to the subject of crew. If you're going to buy a big ship, you're not going to be able to fly it on your own. Well OK, maybe you could, but the authorities aren't going to let you even take off unless you've got the requisite number of crew members on board. Crew can be hired via the bulletin board, and it's worth noting that the more experienced they are, the more you're going to have to pay them. But take heed: don't make

New ships on the block

Yes, all those old favourites from the original Elite are still there, but there are a number of new craft to try, fly or shoot out of the sky.

Ship	Description	Crew	Allegiance
Eagle Mk I	Fighter	1	Independent/Federation
Eagle Mk II	Fighter	1	Federation
Eagle Mk III	Fighter	1	Empire
Falcon	General	1	Federation
Imp Courier	Courier	3	Empire
Imp Trader	Trader	6	Empire
Lifter	Tug	1	Federation
Lion	Trader	4	Federation
Osprey	General	1	Empire
Panther	Trader	15	Federation
Puma Shuttle	Shuttle	11	Federation
Tiger Trader	Trader	5	Federation
Kestrel	Fighter	1	Federation
Hawk	Fighter	1	Federation

Buy New Ship		Cost	Per Existing Cap.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cobra Mk I	£97000	£44750 60t
	Mass (Fully laden)	75t	
	Internal Capacity (no drive)	60t	
	Gun Mountings	2	
	Missile Pylons	2	
	Crew	1	
	Main Thruster Acceleration	0.1 Earth g	
	Retro Thruster Acceleration	121.1 Earth g	
	Drive Fitted	Class 2 Hyperdrive	
	Registration Code	45-196	
	Hyperspace Ranges:		
	Class 1 Class 2 Class 3 Class 4 Class 5 Class 6 Class 7	0.00 10.66 24.00 0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00	
Remaining Used			
Cargo Spare	0	1	Cash
Cabin	0	0	£10001000
Go Back...			
Select Buy to part exchange your ship for a ship with no extra equipment, or View to see the ship with suggested options fitted.			
Landed			
Comms Link			

the same mistake I did. There's nothing worse than shelling out loads of dosh for your dream ship, buying all the add-ons and then finding that there aren't enough people around to join your crew. If you intend to buy a ship that needs additional crew, you'll first have to check and see how many people are available for hire. Unfortunately, you can't employ anyone until you've got a position available, which effectively means that you have to buy first and hire later. You have been warned.

There are three possible start positions, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. The recommended start position is Ross 154, where you begin the game on a moon orbiting a huge, ringed gas giant. Your first ship is an Eagle fighter, which is fast and manoeuvrable but doesn't have much in the way of cargo space. Alternatively, you could start on a newly terraformed Mars complete with blue sky, flying a nicely kitted out Cobra Mk III, or, if you're feeling nostalgic, you might want to begin your game at good old Lave.

The only problem with the last option is that you're already a fugitive in both federal and imperial space, so you have to be careful to stick to trading on independent worlds until you have enough money to pay your fines or are confident enough to take on the authorities.

Sky's the limit

One of the most impressive things about Frontier is the authenticity of the galactic model. David Braben has a strong interest in astronomy, and has gone to great lengths to get it right. Gone are the one star, one planet systems of Elite (the Lave system excepted, of course): instead you'll find systems with up to three stars, each with their own collection of bodies revolving around them.

The star maps are now three dimensional and you are able to rotate through them in any direction you please. I can't really do it any sort of justice by talking



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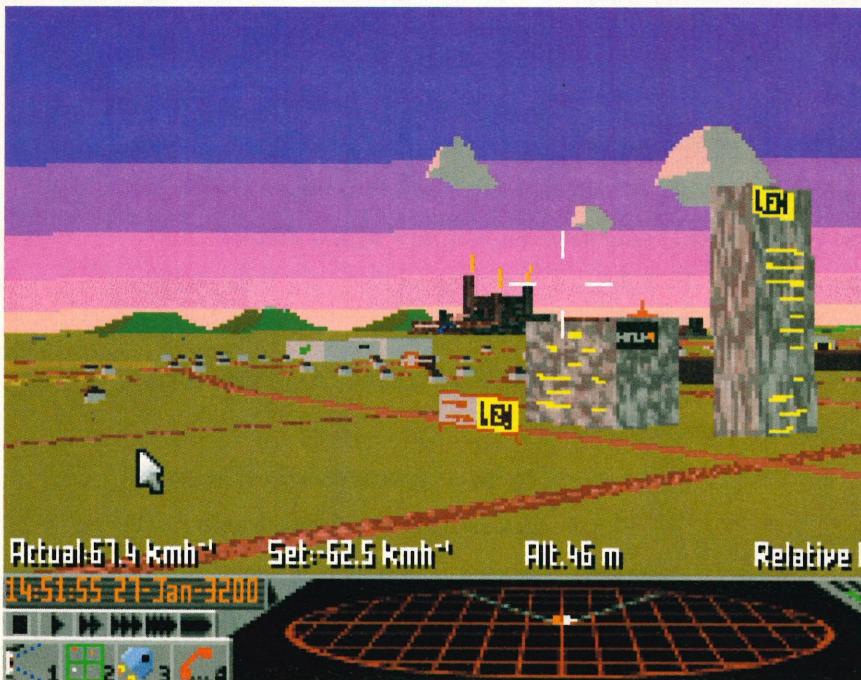
REVIEWS



Recognise this one? It's a Cobra Mk I with a nice, military paint job. Still flies like a pig, though.

Below: Landing on a planet isn't too much different to landing at a space station. You arrive, you buy and sell good and you leave again. The view's nice, though.

Bottom right: The external view is one of the nicer features you'll come across. This is what it looks like when you come out of hyperspace.



Alternatively...



Privateer Origin, £49.99 Rated 5, Issue 26

Origin's answer to Elite, *Privateer* is a space trading game with similar style graphics and combat to the Wing Commander series. There are about 25 missions, if you can actually find them, but for the most part it involves an awful lot of aimless wandering. It has infinitely less depth than Elite, let alone Frontier, and the combat is inferior to X-Wing. Rather disappointing in all.

for a real treat. Easily one of the best features on offer is that, rather than simply having the option to turn the music either on or off, you are able to turn off specific tracks. This means that if there are one or two pieces of music you don't like, you can disable them without losing the music you do enjoy.

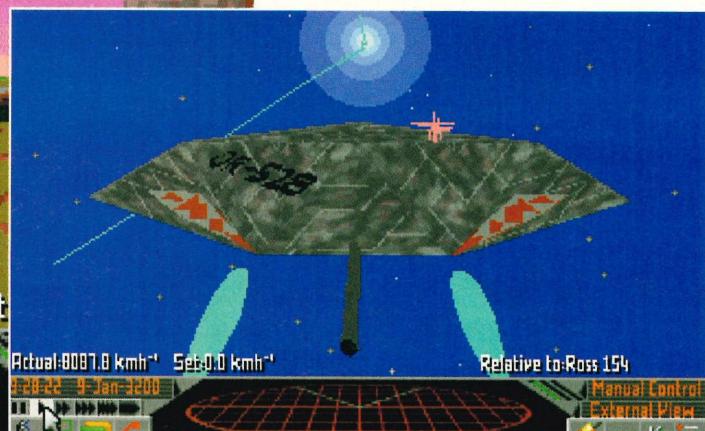
The control methods are a little different from Elite. You can play using a joystick, mouse, keyboard or whatever combination suits you best. I found that using the mouse to fly was difficult, because movement was restricted by the size of my mouse mat and the length of my arms! In any case, I prefer to use the



Space Legends Empire, £34.99 Reviewed Issue 22

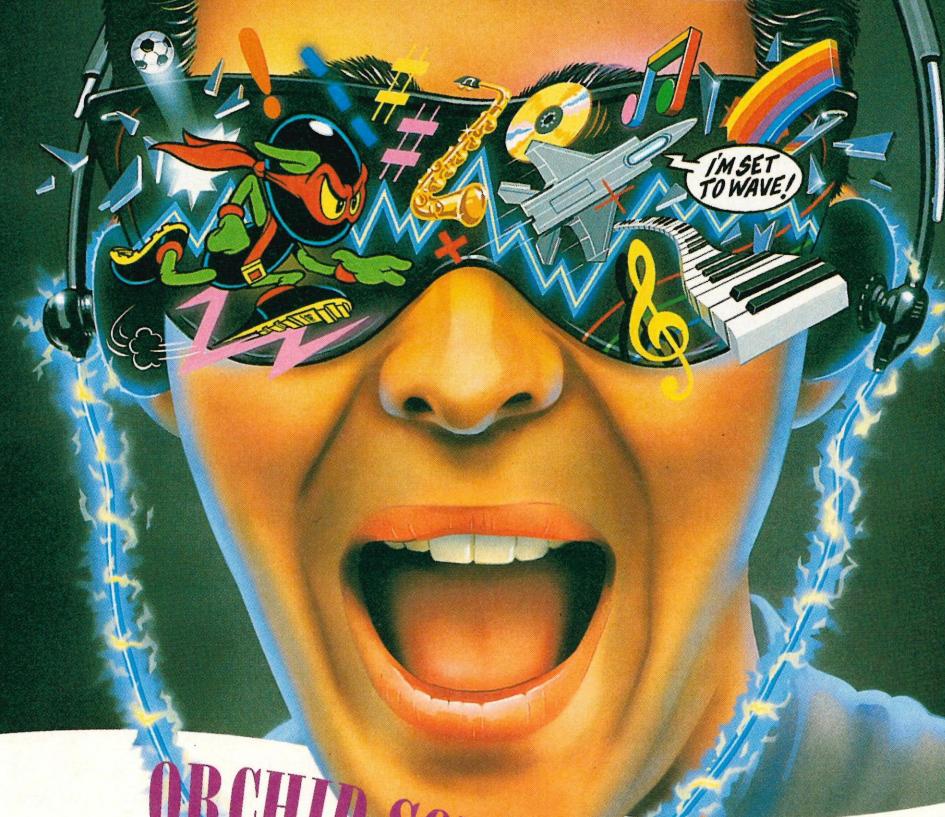
Three classic space games have been included in this value for money pack: Elite Plus, Wing Commander and the futuristic role-playing game, Megatraveller. Elite Plus has aged very well, and if you haven't played it yet, you might want to try it before graduating to Frontier. Wing Commander is more combat-oriented, but remains good fun, and Megatraveller is entertaining stuff.

keyboard in games like this. In Frontier, up and down is represented by the A and Z keys, whilst left and right are represented by comma and full stop. Although these are the original Elite keys, it's far more instinctive for me to use the cursor keys, leaving my left hand to get on with the business of firing my weapons, altering speed and so on. Unfortunately, you can't reconfigure the keyboard to your liking, so I guess it's something I'll just have to get used to. The other thing I was less than keen on was the fact that, unlike Elite, you can't launch your missiles and have the radar on screen at the same time. This is because your weapons display appears in the same area of the screen as the radar, so you can see one or the other but not both at the same time. It makes combat a fair bit trickier, especially when you're in the early stages of the game and are still getting used to the way things work. Again, it's something I'll get used to, but I found it irritating just the same.



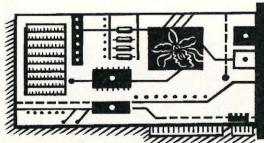
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ever yer game, you'll sure know yer jumpjet from yer hedgehog!

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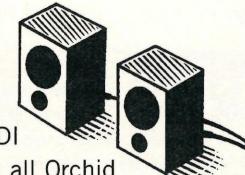
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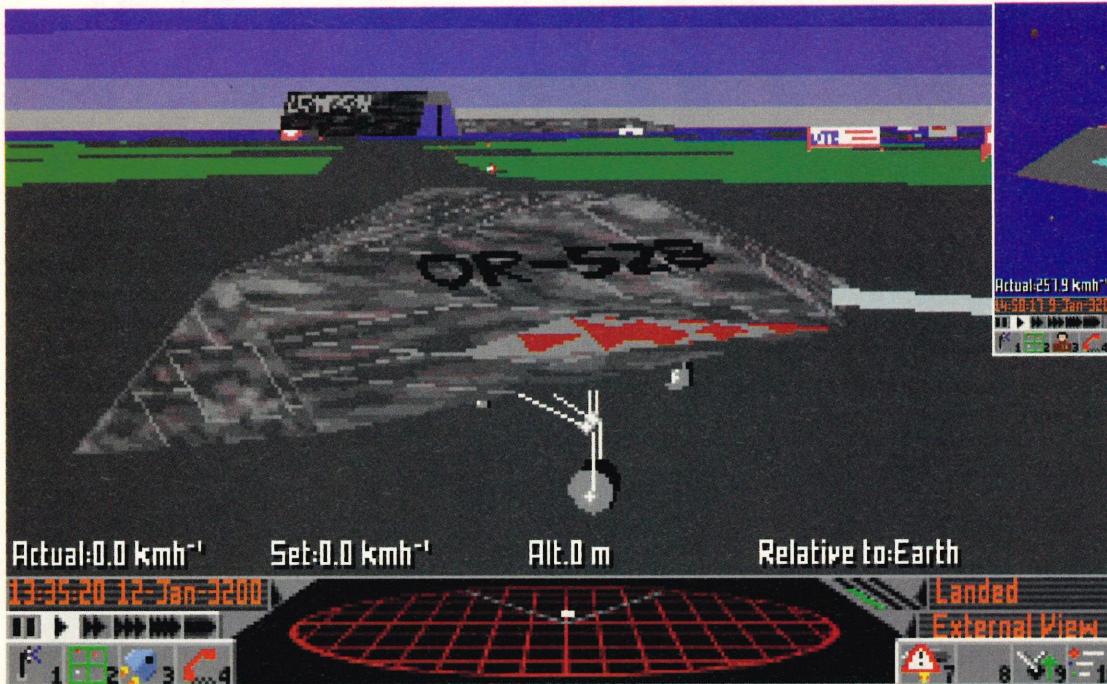


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REVIEWS



Above: Earth, 3200AD. The weather still looks pretty dismal, so I guess they haven't got the hang of climate control just yet.

Top right: If you want to make a fast buck, try mining. Get yourself a mining laser and a fuel scoop and blast away.



products come on around 10 disks which take an hour to install. It would make our lives a lot easier if all games were like Frontier.

Frontier, of course, doesn't have the advantage of being the first game of its kind. Not only does it have to follow in the footsteps of its illustrious parent, but it also has to see off Elite wannabes such as Privateer (reviewed on page 74) and MicroProse's long awaited Starlord, as well as a whole succession of combat games including X-Wing and the Wing Commander series. Still, despite my earlier reservations, I think I can safely say there isn't a game around which can hold a candle to Frontier. Yes, I still get nostalgic whenever I think of Elite, but Frontier has so much more to offer in the long term.

If you're after a game which looks great, sounds great, plays like a dream and will keep you happy for a long, long time, you'd be stupid not to consider buying Frontier. And there I rest my case.

■ Cal Jones

Initially, I had mixed feelings about this game because I wasn't sure if it would give me the same buzz that I got from Elite. When I talk about Elite, it's with the sort of affection I normally reserve for games beginning with the word 'Ultima'. It was the first space game I ever played, and my enjoyment of it was, no doubt, enhanced by the novelty factor. However, once I'd got into Frontier, I began to appreciate it a bit better. It's not the easiest game to master, that I admit. If my memory serves me well, Elite seemed a fair bit easier to play than Frontier (playing Elite Plus, I managed to achieve elite status within a

week), but then Elite doesn't have nearly as much to offer in the way of variety. Frontier is just so mind-blowingly huge. There's so much to do, and with 200,000,000,000 star systems to visit, each with between one and 20 planets, so much to see as well. It might seem a bit daunting at first, but once you've got your bearings, you know you're going to get months, if not years, of play out of it.

More amazing still is that fact that, despite being such an enormous game, Frontier comes on only two disks and can be played from the floppy drive. This is quite something at a time when similar

TechSpec

You need a 386SX with 2Mb RAM minimum. Theoretically, Frontier will work with versions as low as MS-DOS 2.0, but memory might be a problem so MS-DOS 5.0 or above is recommended. A Microsoft compatible mouse is also advisable.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✗
Space taken on hard disk	2Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
--------	---	--------	---	---------------	---

Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
----------	---	----------	---	-------	---

Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	580K

rating
9

Verdict

The best space game ever



W

MICROPROSE

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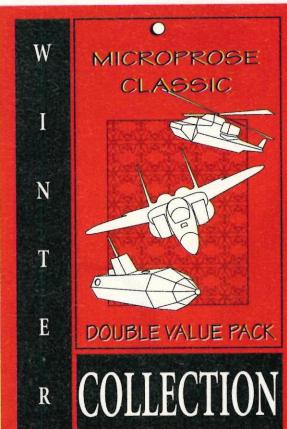
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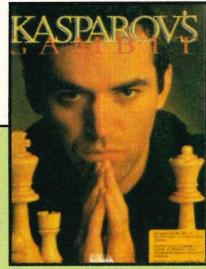
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COLLECTION

WHAT WILL YOU BE TONIGHT?

REVIEWS



Title	Kasparov's Gambit
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Contact	(0753) 549 442
Price	£44.99

Chess is the ultimate role playing game. The game has so much in common with those lovely adventures where you take the role of Elfric the Dwarf or Xylocrone the biorobot from the planet Zgisponk.

For one thing, both chess and RPGs put you in a position of power. In chess, you're basically a general, in charge of an army; in some RPGs, such as Sim Earth, you can even play god. The other big similarity is that chess and your standard adventure game are all about solving problems. In chess, you're overcoming the difficulties presented by your opponent to win the game; in an RPG, you're attempting to overcome the problems posed by the computer, or, more pertinently,

programmer. In both types of games, you're usually cast in the role of decision maker.



But chess is a better game than the vast majority of RPGs. Why? Because on a board no bigger than eight squares by eight, chess offers a far more fluid and varied game, far more scope for logical and lateral thinking, than any adventure or 'god' game.

Chess has a mixed history on the personal computer. Early games weren't a patch on the dedicated chess computers you could buy or the super duper main frame efforts. All that changed with the launch of Chessmaster 3000 in early 1992. The game is still regarded as state of the art for moderately serious players even today, despite the appearance of gimmick-laden alternatives like Battlechess.

You've fallen out with FIDE, and gained the sponsorship for your own tournament. There is an expectant hush around the theatre as you prepare to play Kasparov's Gambit ...

Needless to say, with the staging of the breakaway world chess championship in London this year, it's no surprise to find at least one manufacturer attempting to cash in on the attendant hype. And the game, Kasparov's Gambit from Electronic Arts, is not bad, not bad at all.

Basic moves

If you are familiar with the basic moves of the pieces, then you'll be able to get a game – of sorts – from Gambit. As a result, the documentation is limited to two manuals, one introducing you to the game of chess, one to the software. The chess manual explains the fundamental rules of the game, such as how the dif-

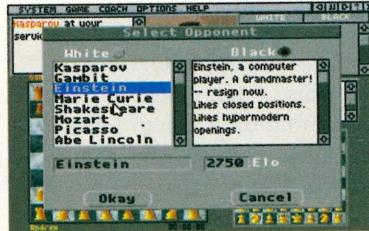
Not content with thrashing our Nige in the world chess championships, Garry Kasparov has lent his name to this chess program. Now you too can be slaughtered by the master

Kasparov's Gambit

Two Minutes of check and mate



The introductory screen: the analysis board at the bottom right hand corner is where the computer tries to predict the following few moves – just how many can be set by you. At the top of the screen are the moves you've played. In the far right corner are a couple of arrows which enable you to move the game back, and give you the chance to play a move again – useful if you've made a mistake.



This is where you can select your opponent. Each one has a different level of skill, and preferences for various tactics. Some like closed play and hypermodern openings (which are usually reviled by Garry himself), others prefer to take as many pieces as possible. Needless to say, Kasparov is damned near impossible to beat, but don't worry, Neanderthal isn't that difficult to take on.



Here am I, playing Jean-Paul Sartre, and – whoops! – silly me, I've just made a big boo-boo. Garry warns me to watch my pawn. He says this as well as the text appearing on screen. But too late, unless I move the game back a couple of moves. Looks as though his queen is going to come storming up the board and cause all sorts of unsavoury problems. Hmm ... perhaps I should cheat ...



The 3D board. His queen has taken my pawn, and now I'm in a spot of bother. You can change the 3D board, but not to anything particularly special, like animated fantasy pieces. (The lack of gimmicks is one of the things I like about the game.) You can't really play a game in 3D mode because, as you can see the board is a bit murky, and you can't really see all the chess pieces that clearly.

ferent pieces can move, and how you can capture. This manual also takes you through some of the game's most fundamental principles, such as the importance of controlling the central four squares during the opening phase of the game. This is neatly done, with the tactics explained in the documentation being illustrated by tutorial programs available through the software. There's also a rather gushy biography of Kasparov, along with an explanation of some of the great games that he's played. If you're interested, you can find these games in the great games section of the software.

Although Kasparov's Gambit requires 11Mb of hard disk space, and takes a heavy toll on your extended memory. To run the game in SVGA colour mode, you need to free up at least 1.35Mb of RAM; to run it in mono VGA, you need a more modest 700K. This means some judicious editing of your Config.sys file is going to be required, or – better still – booting from a floppy disk. But once you have freed up enough memory, you'll find the game will run at an acceptable speed, even on machines based on more feeble processors, such as a 16MHz 386.

The game does not rely on spectacular graphics for its appeal. When you first

load it up, you're greeted with a screen consisting of a large board, which is where you play the game, and an analysis board, where the computer shows you how it anticipates the following few moves. The size of the main board can be adjusted to your taste. You also have the option of changing the colours of the board if you like, but I found the default red and white fine. Whatever the size of the board, the pieces are clear and easy to see. There is a 3D board option, but this is really too murky to play anything approaching a serious game on.

In the top left hand corner of the screen is where each move is recorded in standard notation. This is also where the game records comments on the opening and variations that you're playing. Kasparov's Gambit has an excellent range of openings, although some of the deviant variations are only available at the higher levels of play. If you want to practise a particular opening, there's an option enabling you to play it.

Next to the notation square is a video image of Garry himself. This is distinctly blurred at lower resolutions. Garry is given to making the odd comment on the game. For example, make a really good move, and he says: "Just what I would have played!". Make a mistake, and he says: "I don't think that you're on the right track now." Through the PC speaker, he sounds as though he has had one over the eight. For the record, he seems to have an especial liking for aggressive pawn moves. Don't worry, though, you can switch him off if he

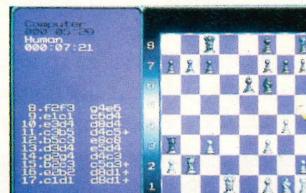
proves too irritating. This is really the only gimmick in an otherwise admirably gimmick-free game.

Across the top of the screen is a range of pulldown menus with which you can access the different options of the game. In the corner are a couple of arrow keys which move you backwards and forwards through a game, as well as a help button. Click on this, and Garry tells you what to do. Unfortunately, he only seems to play at the level that you've chosen to play at. This means that if you follow his advice all the way through – as I did on a few occasions – you actually stand a good

Far left: The quiz program. White to move. Can you see the best place to go?

Below left: The analysis set up screen. If you find it too annoying, you can switch parts, or all of it, off.

Alternatively...



Battlechess 4000
Interplay, £34.99
Rated 6, Issue 18
For those of you who just want to play chess for a bit of fun, then Battlechess might be more to your taste than the comparatively austere Kasparov's Gambit. Battlechess doesn't give you anything like the same range of tutorial features as Gambit, or Chessmaster, but it has some fun gimmicks. For example, when one piece takes another, a screen pops up showing you an animated battle between them. However, this is only mildly diverting, and the quality of chess is not as good as Chessmaster or Gambit.



Chessmaster 3000
Software Toolworks, £35.99
Rated 9, Issue 4
The acknowledged computer grandmaster has more features than Gambit. These give you greater flexibility than Gambit on how you want to board to look. These include special sets, including an ornate fantasy set and a space age minimalist set. Very nice, but most players will probably want to stick to the standard 2D mode and the classical set. The standard of play it offers is very high, and there's some good tutorial features including games from the past and a wide selection of openings.



REVIEWS



A tutorial screen. This particular one is designed to teach you the best way of playing a variety of endgame combinations.

chance of losing. Still, he can be useful for getting you out of a hole.

The game can be played easily enough with the keyboard, but access to the menus and the different options is far, far easier if you have a mouse.

The game has several levels of difficulty, ranging from novice all the way up to grandmaster. The game supplies you with a range of opponents, each with their own weaknesses and strengths, even at the easier levels. So one player, for example, might prefer an open game, another one might prefer closed positions. And if none of the computer's opponents take your fancy, you can customise your own.

I tried the game out on a range of players of differing abilities. The good club player found Kasparov's Gambit gave him a very good game on master and international master levels. More moderate players found the game was beatable – but not consistently so – on the expert level. Obviously, the standard of play also varies according to the amount of time you give the computer to respond to your move. A minute seems about right.

The game is deliberately geared to help you learn how to play well. At the novice level, for example, the computer will actu-

ally move its pieces to entice you to move yours into better positions.

As well as the basic tutorials already mentioned above, there's an enormous range of practice boards for working out endgame variations and more advanced tactics. There's also a quiz program. This takes positions from the program's database of great games, and asks you what the best move is. Often, a particular principle will be explained beforehand, and the quiz gives you the chance to put it into practice. Any jargon words are highlighted, and clicking on them will bring up an explanation of what they mean. I found this part of the program very useful indeed.

There's a couple of other nice features. If you want to find out how you're getting along, you can have each game rated by the computer to see if you're improving or not. Just above the analysis board is an ongoing rating which gives you an idea of how you're doing according to the computer. This is rated according to the standard that you're playing at, so a daring sacrifice at some of the lower levels will result in the rating swinging massively against you.

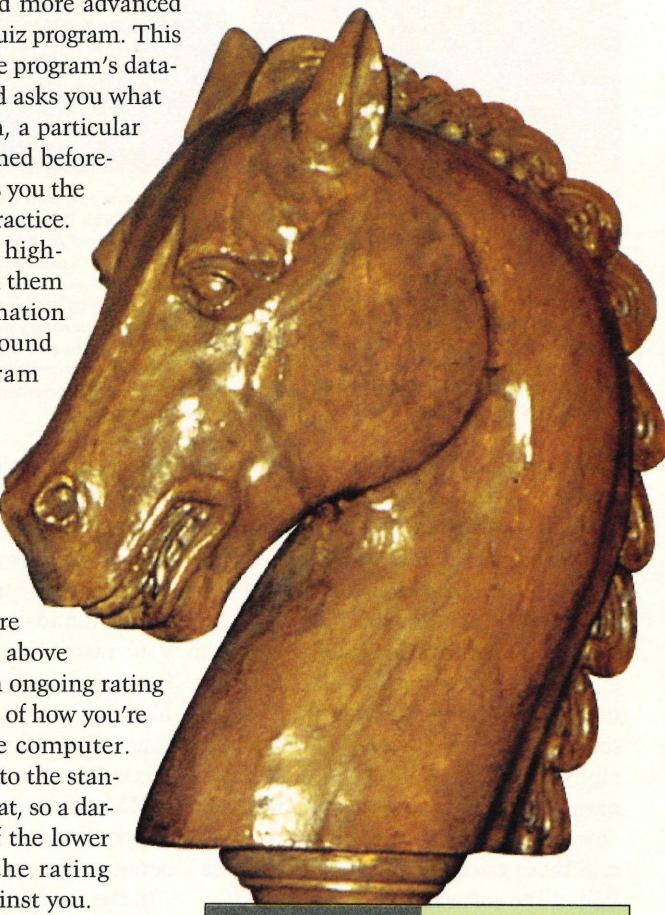
The game is not entirely perfect. It doesn't have as many features as Chessmaster 3000. In some ways, this is good – I can't imagine players who take the game seriously needing a special fantasy set to enjoy themselves. But there are some features from Chessmaster which Gambit could have half-inched to good effect. One feature I particularly liked from Chessmaster highlights those of your pieces threatened by an opponent.

The program also has a couple of strange quirks. On the lower levels, the machine sometimes stopped playing when confronted with an awkward situation, and when the allotted time to make a move had run out. This did not happen at any level above beginner. And it was also difficult to get out of the tutorial section of the program to start a new game against the computer.

But Kasparov's Gambit is, on the whole, a damn good chess game. No matter what level you're at in terms of ability – unless you're really good – the machine will give you a challenging game. The program also lives up to its aim of improving your game. Certainly, it made me think a lot more about my chess, and some of the

basic principles. All in all, if you've been bitten by the world championship bug, then this is a game well worth looking at.

■ Andy Johnson



TechSpec

A mouse is not strictly necessary to play Kasparov's

Gambit, but it is highly recommended because it makes life so much easier. The other point is that the game demands an awful lot of free extended memory before it will work on your PC.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	11Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✓		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	16MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	580K

Verdict

A damn good chess game

rating
8

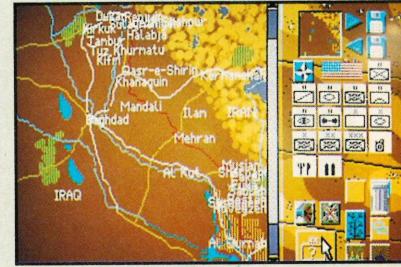
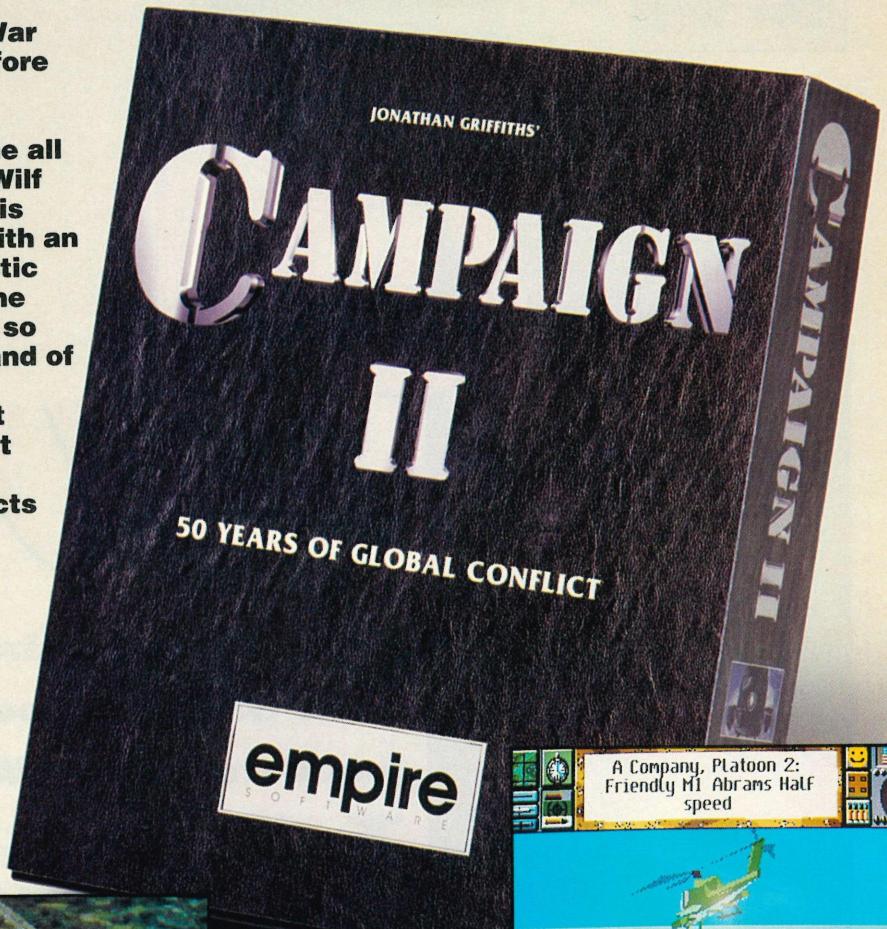
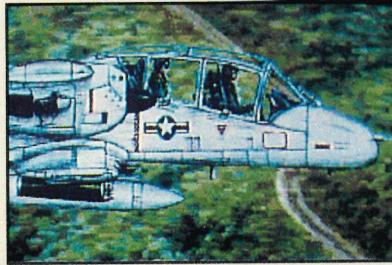
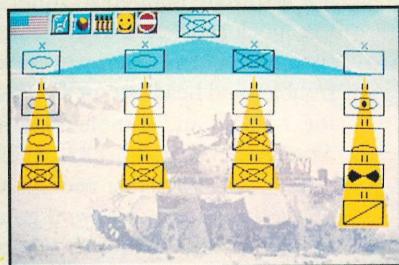
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Campaign II heralds a new generation of War Simulations

Campaign II heralds a new generation of War Simulations with more depth than ever before and fabulous real-time 3D action.

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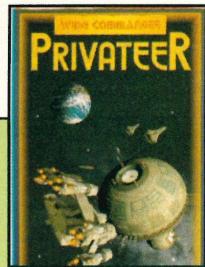
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SOFTWARE

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Title	Privateer
Publisher	Origin/Electronic Arts
Contact	(0753) 549442
Price	£49.99 + £19.99 for speech pack

Privateer

Kilrathi, Retros, pirates, a mysterious alien plot and some trading to boot. Is Privateer an Elite beater or just a trumped up Wing Commander clone?

Like Elite 2, Privateer was a game that I'd been looking forward to with some eagerness. I suspect, like many others, I was seduced by the promise of an improved Wing Commander game but with better graphics, trading, interactive missions, speech and an abundance of those famous cinematic scenes.

But sadly this isn't a description that fits the Privateer that I've been playing. It must be some completely different Privateer because despite the hype and my high hopes, nothing much here seems to have changed. The old (and I stress the word 'old') Wing Commander game engine has just been dragged screaming out of the cupboard, tweaked and happily recycled. OK, the screenshots here may look pretty but the gameplay tells quite a different story.

If this is an example of the way that the Commander style games are heading then tragically Origin's much-loved Wing Commander series is not just going to wither, it's going to turn gangrenous and drop off completely.

But enough doom and gloom, what's Privateer all about? Well, our story begins in the year 2670 ...

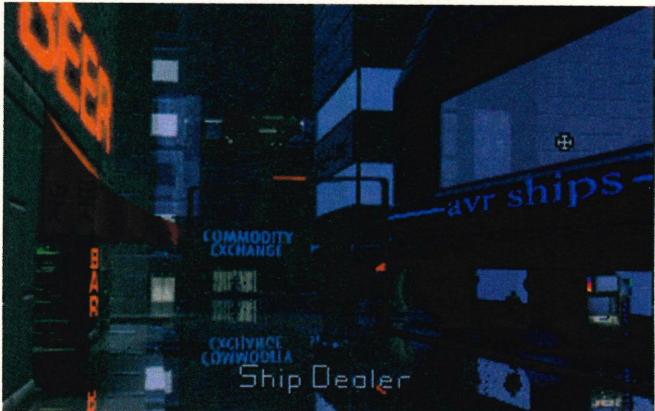
In dark, dystopian futures it's always dark, moodily lit (with broken neon) and chucking it down with rain.

There's more to Privateer than just hauling goods from space station A to planet B. Talking to Sandoval sends you down the road to a Wing Commander-style plot narrative, trying to get info on an alien artefact and the mysterious alien ship.

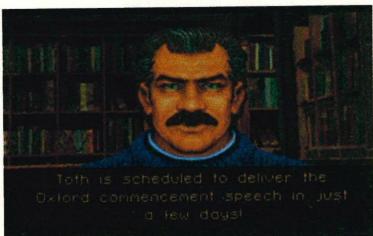
A familiar story

After the death of your grandfather, you are fortunate enough to inherit an ageing, pock-marked Tarsus freighter and fired with enthusiasm you pack up your troubles and head out for the Gemini sector, a rough and tumble territory on the Terran-Kilrathi border. As the story begins, you have just become Gemini's newest privateer, a have-a-go entrepreneur making his money wherever and whenever he can. Terran space is, as they say, your oyster.

Because Privateer isn't restricted by a central narrative like its Wing Commander forbears, you can now go wherever



Two Minutes of square-jawed heroics



After Sandoval gets killed and leaves me a strange alien artefact, I decide to pay a visit to Oxford University to do some research. But they won't let me in unless I run an errand for them.



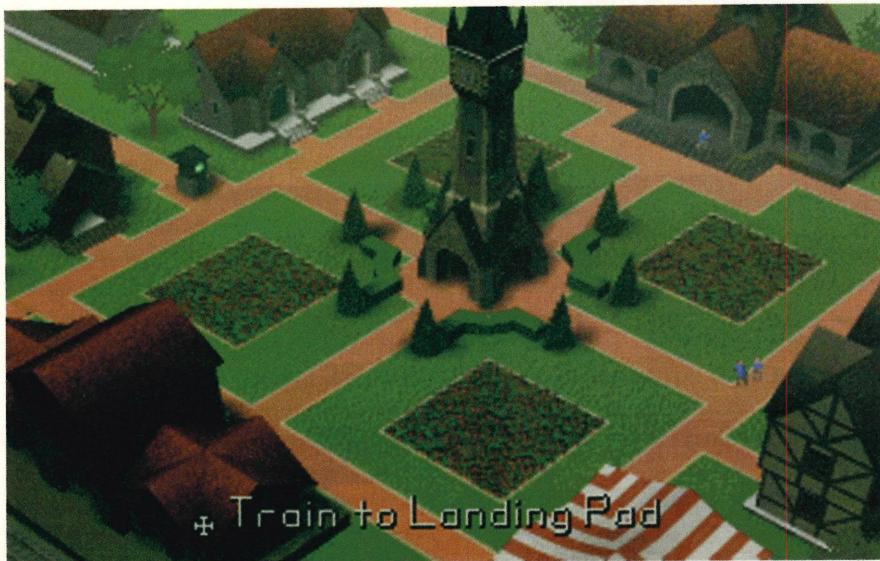
Escort this author in from Nav 3, they said, the Church of Man wants him dead. It seems that Toth here (a dead ringer for Salman Rushdie if ever there was one) is a marked man.



Sure enough, six ships appear and blow Toth's Drayman ship into tiny, glittering pieces. Dodging laser fire, I notice some floating debris and, luckily for me, it seems Toth has ejected.



Great, activate the tractor beam and pick him up. Sadly, I haven't bought a tractor beam so I get sucked into a raging battle which I don't escape from. Where was that saved game?



you want and do whatever you want. Hang out in space bars, run copies of alien pornography to frustrated miners or heroically clear vital space lanes of grubby undesirables. The choice is yours.

The game, as I've mentioned, takes place in the Gemini sector and Gemini itself is split into four quadrants (Clarke, Fariss, Humboldt and Potter) with each quadrant containing a number of star systems. Each of these stars has several major planets or bases which differ in size and function and include refineries, mining colonies and pleasure planets. But despite their varying types, the bases always offer similar services and usually include a bar, the ship dealer (including repair services), a mission computer, mercenary and merchant guilds and the all-important commodity exchange.

Trading places

Like Elite, your fortune in Privateer will probably be made by buying goods from the commodity exchange and then running them from one base to another. For example, if you buy food at an agricultural world you can then sell it on for a

profit at a mining colony where food is scarce. At the mining colony, you can then buy iron or steel, jump back to the agricultural world where the price is higher and sell it on. There's also money to be made by transporting drugs and guns, but as the militia search ships regularly it's rather unwise to incur their displeasure. Like the pirates they're cool and efficient killers when they have to be.

But if the idea of endless grain trading doesn't exactly fill you with excitement, quicker money can be made by accepting a variety of missions on offer at the bases. Each base has a mission computer (a sort of electronic bulletin board), where you can choose paying missions that range from simple cargo carriage to dangerous nav-point patrols. Although the money for these is sizeable, much better missions can be obtained if you join either the merchant or the mercenary guild. These guilds guarantee higher paid missions, but do expect you to pay a nominal joining fee for the privilege.

Combat figures prominently in the world of Privateer, and this is especially true of the missions. There you are, inno-

cently carrying 40 tons of rare gemstones to New Constantinople when you're suddenly head to head with five or six pirates telling you to dump your cargo before you blow. If your fighting skills aren't up to scratch you'll be sucking vacuum within a few minutes. Like Wing Commander before it, missions are very, very difficult so don't go expecting an easy ride.

You see, the better your cargo the more attention you're going to attract in the spacelanes and death can come from a variety of sources. There's your run-of-the-mill pirate; the Retros, who are malicious and often insane and the followers of the Church of Man, a fanatical religious sect who hate technology and destroy its worshippers (namely you). If you make it up to the border's edge you'll also encounter the Kilrathi but be warned, they're even tougher than last time.

Of course, if you're really mercenary you can always sport a patch over one eye, throw your morals out of the window and take up piracy. It's a simple life, there's no fee for joining and all you have to do is hang around space stations putting large holes into innocent traders. Once you've picked your victim and reduced his ship to a cloud of glittering metal, if you've managed to buy a tractor beam you can just flick the switch and pick up any cargo that survived the explosion.

Gemini sector has four major population centres, namely Perry Naval Base, New Constantinople, New Detroit and good old planet Oxford as you see here.

The commodity exchange is where you'll spend much of your early days. You can buy anything here from guns and plastics to movies and textiles.





I thought this job was just a run of iron to the Liverpool refinery base.

Privateer continues the Origin trend of using well muscled, square-jawed heroes. This handsome devil is you.

If you find you are struggling with the pirates and Retros, as you earn more money you can upgrade and improve your existing ship by adding new weapons (Mass Drivers, Meson Blasters, Ionic Pulse Cannons), adding more missiles (Friend or Foe, Heat Seeking and Dumb Fire) and by replacing your ineffective scanner. You can also add a jump drive, repair droids and an ECM to transform your ship into not just a cargo ship but a rather nifty weapons platform.

If you manage to acquire an obscene amount of money, you also have the option to trade in your old Tarsus and buy a new ship. How about the Centurion, a nippy fighter or the Galaxy, a cavernous freighter or even the Orion, a ship that's as tough as a 1,000 ton asteroid and steers like one too?

However you choose to conduct your business, the aim of Privateer is to make huge pots of money. With more money you can upgrade your ship and with a better equipped ship you'll have a much better chance of finding and completing the hidden subplot.

Did you say hidden subplot?

When I first started playing Privateer, I had to wonder what my motivation was. Why exactly was I doing all this trading? In Elite, for example, I traded and struggled to attain elite status and in the forthcoming Starlord I'm told I have to strive to be Emperor of the galaxy. For a long time, I really couldn't see any point to Privateer at all.

But apparently there is a point to

Privateer because there is, in fact, a central plot. Like Strike Commander, Privateer has a short animated intro sequence that shows your battered Tarsus being pursued by a couple of pirates and ends with a battle in an asteroid field, a battle keenly observed by a mysterious alien spaceship.

The alien ship, a sleek, grey affair with bulbous neon-green attachments is never explained and after the intro I didn't think anything more of it. But the enigmatic ship indicates the presence of a Wing Commander-style plot which is set in motion when you meet a guy named Sandoval in New Detroit.

Chatting to Sandoval kickstarts an underlying plot narrative that takes you across the entire Gemini sector and includes an alien artefact, treachery and a huge amount of killing. Here Privateer

shows its true colours, and is now revealed to be little more than a thinly disguised Wing Commander 3 with some unoriginal trading elements.

An epic phoney?

You see, as in Wings 1 and 2, Privateer has a sequence of 20 or so missions that lie at the heart of the game. Like the earlier Wing Commander outings, these missions are intensely difficult, but once you've discovered them and begin to play the story the whole sham that is Origin's Privateer starts to rear its ugly head.

Let's imagine Privateer is just another Wing Commander game. You've got your usual combat routines, a bit of inter-ship communication but this time around, instead of starting with a decent ship, you've got to start from scratch.

In Privateer, you have to buy all the equipment you were used to having in the first place, ie, afterburners, mass driver cannons, an ECM, the works. Of course, to buy all these things you need a lot more money and this is where the trading aspect comes in. Because by the time you've traded and fought your way to a decent ship, you've spent countless hours just moving from A to B, from B to A, and jumping occasionally to C.

So is Privateer just Wing Commander with a useless ship? Is the trading aspect little more than a blatant longevity booster? Well, look at it this way. In Wing Commander, once you had finished the

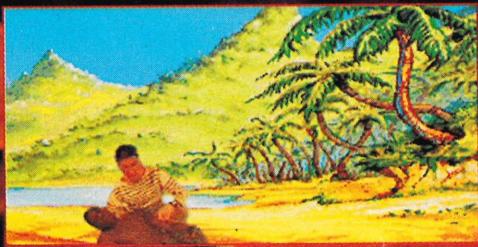


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REVIEWS

Once again combat plays a major role in Privateer, but after the frantic action of X-Wing, it's all a bit flat, stale and utterly lacklustre.



missions and played out the narrative, that was it, the game ended and you stuck the disks back in the box. Privateer neatly delays this by depriving you of a decent ship. If you haven't got a spare two thousand, you can't even buy another quadrant map, which means you're stuck in Humboldt quadrant until you can. If I hadn't hacked the game code and given myself 10 million credits, I would have been bored stupid in under two days.

I don't deny the fact that Privateer is a superbly presented and polished game – what I am suggesting is that it isn't as good as it should be. One of the main reasons for this is the game engine itself because, compared to X-Wing, the look and feel of the combat in Privateer is so dated it's a positive antique. In fact, after X-Wing it's difficult going back to Wing Commander style combat, especially when it hasn't even changed. Privateer hasn't made any attempt to keep up with the times. Even the famous Origin cinematic sequences are thin on the ground.

Privateer also gives the player no feeling of being in a working universe, a place where if you just stopped still and waited, people would just go about doing their own thing. This was the appeal of Elite because you could follow other traders until they docked, sunskim for fuel and even aggravate the police. Privateer creates none of this and if you pause to watch a Drayman ship, he'll just hang there in space and wobble, more a part of the scenery than a part of the universe.

Long live the DX2

So what exactly is going on? Maybe Origin needs to rethink its strategy, because even if I did have the recommended 486 DX2, playing Privateer would be like watching a silent movie on a Nicam stereo TV. Why? Well, a 486 DX2 has all this power and Privateer doesn't seem to take any advantage of it. It simply needs the extra processing power and speed to shift the ageing bitmap graphics along. With Chris Roberts at the



Frontier: Elite 2
Gametek, £39.99

Rated 9, Issue 26

As the grandson of the original Elite pilot (boy, does this ever sound familiar), you have to trade, fight, mine and murder your way to the goal of fame and fortune. Caught in a cold war somewhere between two huge federations, Frontier takes the best of the original and expands on it to produce an enormous game. Check out the review on page 64.



Strike Commander
Origin/EA, £45.99

Rated 8, Issue 20

After the Wing Commander series, Origin turned its hand to the fast jets and mercenary missions. Flying for the wildcat squadron, as in Wing Commander, you are involved in a sequence of about 25 missions that include the famous Origin 'talky' bits and the equally famous animated cutscenes. Needs an extremely fast machine, unfortunately.

Alternatively...

Privateer helm I really expected something much, much better. But as I watched yet another bitmapped refinery chug slowly into view on my 33MHz 486 I knew something had gone horribly wrong somewhere along the line.

But if I could forget all this, the gameplay and the graphics included, the greatest travesty of all is the price that Origin is charging for its latest ultimate gaming experience. Not only is the actual game a whopping £49.99 but selling the speech pack separately is nothing short of reprehensible. Origin and Electronic Arts are expecting you to fork out £50 for the game and then another £20 for snippets of speech that are repetitive and badly digitised to say the least. £70 for the lot? It's an insult to both my intelligence and my wallet.

In the end, despite Privateer's claims to variety, I found it about as captivating as a page of my local telephone directory.

At £70 I'd be thoroughly disappointed if I'd bought this game. Although Privateer will undoubtedly appeal to all you hardened and loyal wingnuts out there, if you haven't got a monster fast machine and you're looking for trading, piracy and some excitement go out and buy Elite 2 instead. Privateer, I'm sorry to say, is a bit of a waste of time.

■ Dean Evans

TechSpec

Like almost every other Origin game, Privateer takes up a lot of disk space, eats an immense amount of memory and needs a very fast machine. Privateer does not, it says on the box, support disk compression.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	20Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✗	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz 486
Minimum memory	4Mb
Free RAM required	570K

Verdict

A jaded assembly of old game routines

rating

5

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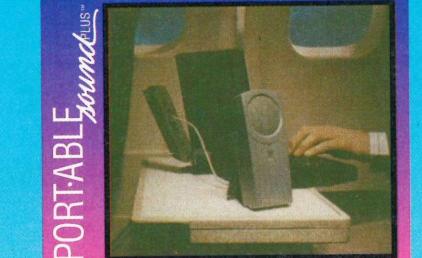
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Title	Return to Zork
Publisher	Activision
Contact	(0295) 252524
Price	\$45.99

Return to Zork

For veterans of the genre, Zork conjures up memories of halcyon days of text-only adventures. This sixth instalment in the series now boasts speech and animated graphics

If you've never played an adventure before, you've probably never heard of Zork. Anyone who knows the Great Underground Empire intimately can skip the next couple of paragraphs – but for the rest of you ...

Zork was the original personal computer adventure game. It simultaneously launched text adventures and established the reputation of its creators, Infocom, as masters of the format. Boasting some of the best descriptive prose anywhere, impressive technical achievements and a consistently strong plot, it helped establish a whole new genre for the emerging home computers.

Four more mainstream games were set in, above or across the sea from the Great Underground Empire. Zork II: The Wizard of Frobozz provided a new, tougher challenge, and Zork III: The

Dungeon Master concluded the original trilogy with a fair stab at interactive fiction. Beyond Zork, set in the kingdom of Quendor, featured an auto-mapper and a function key repeat-command facility, but was still text-only. Zork Zero represented a peak in Infocom's achievements, and included incidental puzzle graphics, an auto-mapper and a new, more friendly parser. Two more Zork titles – Zorkquest 1 and 2 – were part of Infocom's experimental Infocomics range, but with CGA graphics and a few technical and structural drawbacks they didn't quite live up to their potential.

This historical background is important because any new title bearing the name Zork automatically raises expectations. It's a series that consistently broke new ground in technological achievement and imaginative detail, and anything which

This sequence of events taken from the very beginning of the story will give you some idea about the main game elements. New puzzles, speeches and locations mark your progress.



You descend from the Valley of the Vultures to find a lighthouse at the side of a river. There doesn't seem to be anywhere else to go, and after a lengthy monologue the lighthouse keeper lets you in.



continues the line should create a big splash in the adventure game pond.

Unfortunately, Return to Zork is more of a ripple than a splash. Its plot, characters, tough puzzles and innovative features are quite typical of the series, but its unrestrained use of new technology and its mostly linear structure are a huge inescapable let-down.

Zork talk

You can read the plot on the back of the box if you want, but since you've paid good money for this magazine, I'll summarise the story for you here.

Legend has it that the Great Underground Empire of Zork was destroyed and all evil magic dispersed. However, the IT&L Corporation reckons it has rediscovered Zork beneath the Valley of the Sparrows. Since this revelation, people and property have vanished into thin air, and nightmares, madness and paranoia have increased.

You, playing the ubiquitous unwitting traveller who always seems to get roped into tasks like this, have to save Zork

from the forces of evil. And so on.

The package includes excellent documentation (the hugely informative and beautifully written Encyclopaedia Frobozzica – well worth a read), some information on the actors who helped make the digitized characters more realistic, a technical help card and the disks. On the whole, a solid base.

You load up the game and find yourself in a mountain pass. You listen to a speech. You try to talk to a vulture. You examine a sign and see that there is a puzzle to be solved.

These three actions encapsulate the sometimes tiresome and repetitive structure of the whole game. You talk to people, you try a few things out, you solve a puzzle, you progress, you think about the puzzles you haven't solved, you scratch your head, you talk to people again ... and so it goes on.

It's a slow process and there isn't much fun involved. A game such as Day of the Tentacle is packed with humour to relieve the mundanity of repeated actions, and consistently strong humour is something

which this game lacks. In addition, the original Zork trilogy actually left it up to your imagination to fill in any gaps and didn't force you to read everything twice if you didn't want to.

However, because of its powerful visual and aural effects, Return to Zork insists relentlessly that you listen to the same speeches over and over again. This, as you can probably imagine, becomes very irritating very quickly.

But more of that later. Modern graphic adventures require a good icon-based interface to minimise frustration and enable you to concentrate principally on solving puzzles. The interface used to direct your actions here is very good, and definitely the strongest technical feature in the game.

Everything is mouse controlled (with keyboard and joystick options) and is based on two icon panels accessed by clicking the left and right mouse buttons. One panel reveals the inventory, the other a variable display of action icons. The icons available vary according to the location you're in and the item you're holding at the time.

For example, at the start you have a box of matches. You can use this to light a match, and use the lit match to burn things. Most objects can be picked up and

The first major mystery which you face is discovering what really happened to East Shanbar. Even when you do learn the truth, you still have to do something about it ...

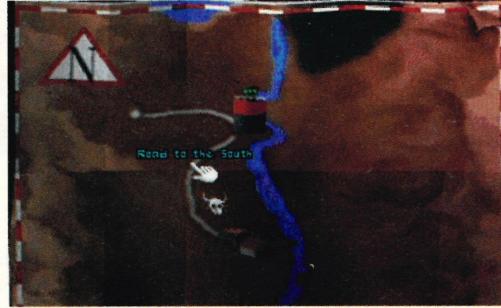
As you progress, you can take photos of places you visit and record conversations. Showing these to strangers could reveal absolutely vital information.



Two Minutes spent trying to find a way south



Adopting a 'fascinated' pose, you glean information from the lighthouse keeper about your map, inventory and photographs. Your tape recorder automatically records his most significant replies.



The keeper told you that the road to the south was impassable (you die if you try to use it), so you need to find a new route to West Shanbar. That river looks a likely alternative, if only you could find a boat.



Some handy objects behind the lighthouse help you build a raft, so you're soon gliding down the river. Now ... do you grab hold of the bridge or carry on drifting? The wrong choice will cost you your life.

An empire on one disc!

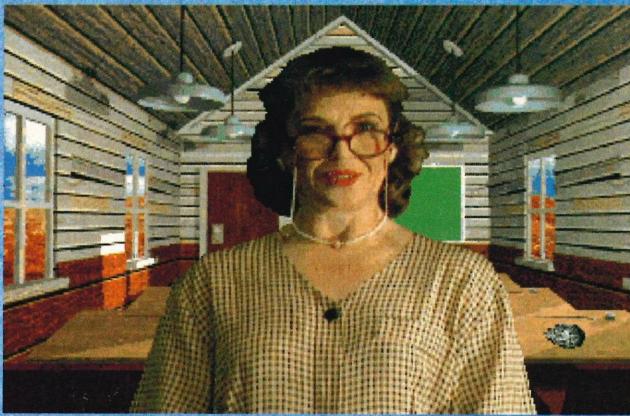
There will be two CD-ROM versions of Return to Zork, an "enhanced" version of the game, and an MPEG version. The "enhanced" Zork costs slightly more (£49.99), but offers a few advantages (as well as some problems). The program is packed onto one disc and features excellent sound and graphics; however, apart from some impressive movie cut-sequences, the gameplay is essentially the same. In addition to the adventure itself, the CD contains 25 high-quality orchestral tracks which you can listen to on a standard CD-player.

Unfortunately, you need a data transfer rate of at least 150K per second to enjoy the game at all, and the recommended speed is 300K per second. If you slip below the minimum level, the quality of the movie sequences is affected, and at around 100K the speech becomes patchy. A slow VGA adapter or low processor speed will also affect the quality of the sound.

A further crucial problem is that this version uses up a massive 42Mb of hard disk space when fully installed. In practice, you don't have much choice about this, since if you decide against installation the action slows considerably.

However, if you have the right equipment and enough hard disk space, and you want convenience in a game with impressive graphics and sound effects, the CD option is preferable to its disk-based rival. The standard of acting may not always be superb (see the cast list, overleaf) and the game itself may lack bite, but, in general, the CD format is well used.

The standard CD version described above shouldn't, however, be confused with the MPEG Zork, which will be bundled with the ReelMagic card and feature near-TV quality graphics (see the article on ReelMagic, in PC Review, Issue 25, for more details on this).



used on people, places or other items.

Naturally, all the expected traditional adventure commands such as giving, throwing, dropping, reading, using, drinking/eating are also readily available. However, in addition you have special commands for particular situations, which may enable you to pour out the contents of a glass, or bind two objects together to create a third, new item.

This system is so flexible that you can

make mistakes very easily, so it's not actually such a great idea to go around burning everything or stabbing people with the knife. You're well advised to save your position often (there are 99 saved game slots). If you ignore the advice, then you're going to have plenty of opportunity to marvel at the subtle variations in the death sequences.

There are many different and neatly-drawn characters in Return to Zork, and

most of them have something useful to offer. A couple of innovative features assist in the search for clues. You can take snapshots of locations and people and ask other characters to comment on them, and you have a tape recorder which automatically records every useful snippet of information. You can replay what you've heard to other characters, sometimes provoking a reaction.

In practice, this can be irksome, since even after a bit of intelligent filtering of the information available, you still waste a lot of time relaying speeches to people who don't want to listen, or showing pictures to people who aren't interested. It's a nice idea, but it doesn't quite come off in this game.

The same can be said of the sound and graphics. There is a huge amount of digitised dialogue in the game, but most of it is disappointingly fuzzy (using a Sound Blaster Pro card). The acting owes more to sitcoms than stage or cinema, but it suits the off-beat nature of the game well.

However, the real problem I had with the sound was the speech. Some characters drone on and on, and because you can't skip a speech once it's started, you're occasionally forced to listen to the same monologue several times. It's dull, it's annoying and it ruined much of the atmosphere for me. Text adventures did sometimes repeat themselves, but they did it silently.

Apart from the animations, the graphics are competent without being outstanding, and occasionally lack realism or an easily understood perspective. In general, Return to Zork boasts few graphical innovations, and is certainly a long way behind the experimental 3D world of a game such as Betrayal at Krondor.

Alternatively...

Bedroom
You can't go that way.

>s
You miss the doorway by a good eighteen inches.

>switch on light
Good start to the day. Pity it's going to be dark now.

Bedroom
The bedroom is a mess.
It is a small bedroom with a faded carpet and



The Lost Treasures of Infocom **Activision, £29.99**

If you yearn for the heady days of text adventures, this compilation is exceptional value for money. Amongst its 21 all-time classics (ie, very old games) are the legendary Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and all previous instalments in the Zork saga: Zorks I, II and III, Beyond Zork and Zork Zero.

The 7th Guest **Virgin, £69.99**

Rated 7, Issue 20

Despite stunning visual and aural effects, in gameplay terms this game is a bit of a loser. Set in a haunted house, it features a measly 23 puzzles, some of which are ridiculously easy to solve. However, excellent movie sequences and innovative technology save it from obscurity.

Daughter of Serpents **Millennium, £39.99**

Rated 7, Issue 18

With a linear plot, a strong link between puzzle-solving and progress, an intuitive interface and excellent graphics and sound, this is a very close cousin to Return to Zork. Zork has a slight edge in technological terms, but Daughter of Serpents is by far the more enjoyable game.



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Those actors in full

At no expense spared, Activision has used real-life actors to provide dialogue and digitisations in Return to Zork. Here is the full dramatis personae and their track record so far:

Jason Hervey (The Wonder Years)

Trolls, Troll leader

Robin Lively (Doogie Howser, Twin Peaks)

Fairy

**A J Langer (In the Heat of the Night,
Hangin' with Mr Cooper)**

Rebecca

Ernie Lively (Passenger 57)

Moodock

Michael Stadvec (General Hospital)

Blacksmith, Ancient God

Julie St. Claire Capone (Sid & Nancy)

Holy Woman

Howard Mann (Mr Saturday Night, Moonlighting)

Keeper

**Tamara Daniels (Nick for Kids hostess,
Fatal Attraction, Awakenings)**

Mushroom

Raul Rizik (Broadcast News, Growing Pains)

Mayor

**Nino & Leonard Surdo (Major Dad,
Days of Our Lives)**

Dwarven General, Dwarven Mine Leader

Michael Johnson (227, Pieces of a Man)

F Rooper

Jason Lively (European Vacation)

Ben Fyshin

Will McAllister

Trembyle

Lori Lively

Tree Spirit

Michele Dahlin

Witch Itah

Harold Smith

Boos Myller

Elaine Lively

Molly Moodock

Charles Carpenter

Guardian

Matt Grimaldi

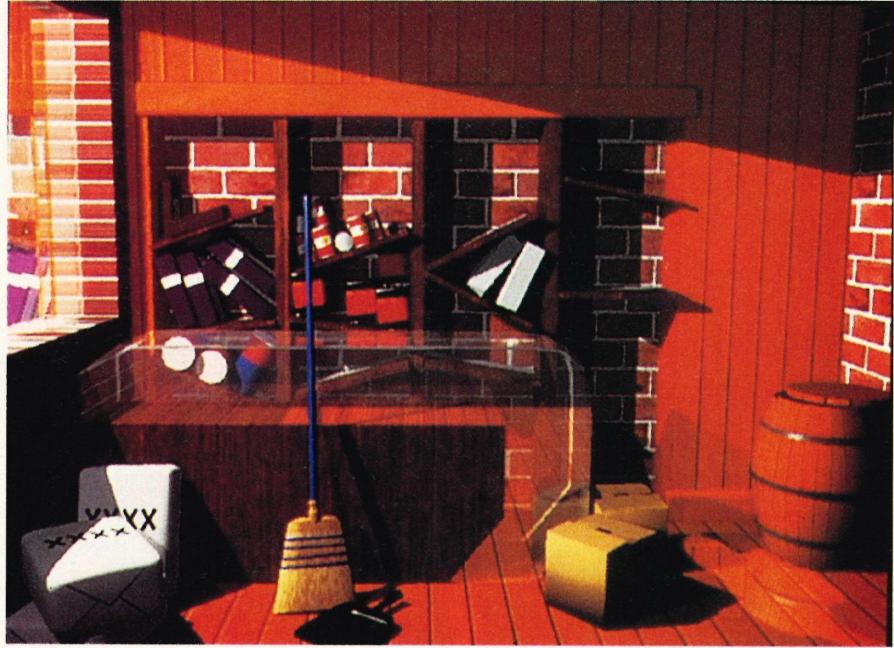
Cliff

Edan Gross (Northen Exposure, Empty Nest)

Waif

Sam Jones (Flash Gordon in the film Flash Gordon)

Bowman



Farewell to Zork

Minor inconsistencies add to the general feeling of disappointment. To take only a couple of examples from the very beginning: a picture captioned "6 Zorkmids" actually shows over a dozen coins, and a character described as "too drunk to answer" suddenly becomes talkative when correctly prompted. These might seem like trivial concerns, but when so much else in the game is irritating, these details diminish your enjoyment.

The good news is, however, that Return to Zork is a reasonably large game with plenty to do, and making progress isn't particularly easy.

The puzzles are often tough – and occasionally even silly – and their solutions are based on a combination of mythology, numerology, terrible puns, practical solutions, nursery rhymes and even recent events. Cracking a puzzle involves an awful lot of head-scratching followed by immense relief.

In addition, there are plenty of references to the previous instalments to please nostalgic Zork fans, and the graphics are, on the whole, a bonus.

The bad news is that in spirit this is basically an old-style text adventure enhanced by graphics, speech and an icon interface. The repetitive puzzle structure,



repeated speeches, constant travelling between locations and the need to use exactly the right word (or icon, or object), are all a disappointment. There are plenty of innovative features, such as the tape recorder, photo album and the bizarre, half-modern game environment – but, in the final analysis, these just aren't enough to give Return to Zork a significant edge over its rivals.

■ **Gordon Houghton**

TechSpec

This eats up almost 24Mb of hard disk space. You need DOS 5.0, and any of the three major sound cards; others are also supported. The game makes use of extra XMS/EMS memory up to 4Mb. I'd recommend a mouse, since both joystick and keys are slightly more awkward.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	24Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	580K

Verdict

An old-style adventure game in new clothes

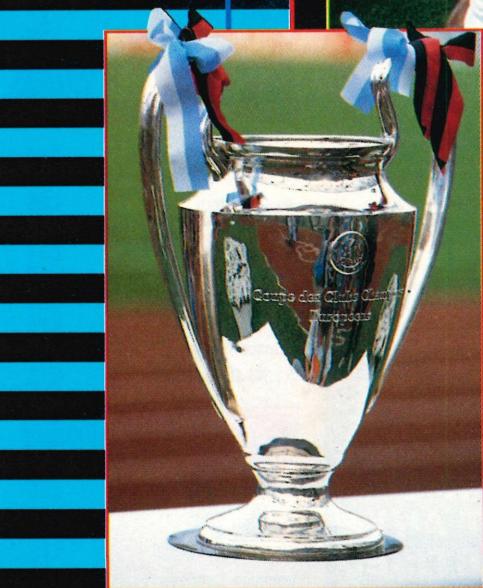
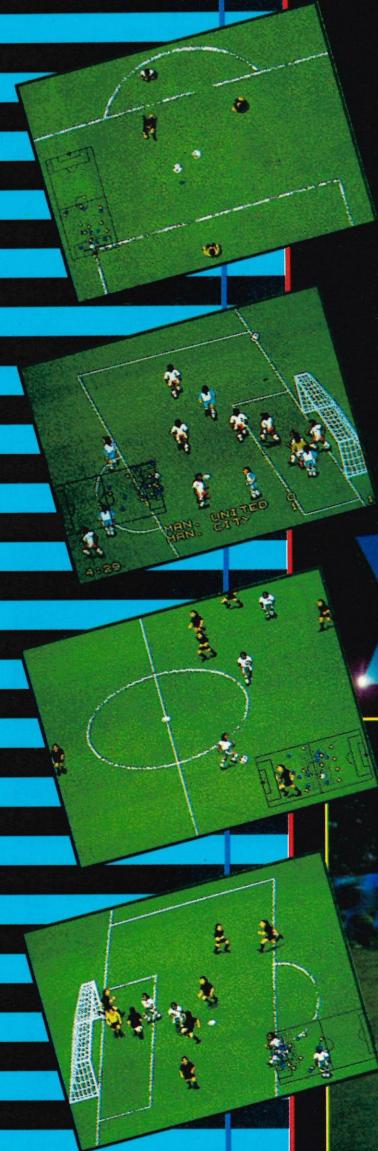
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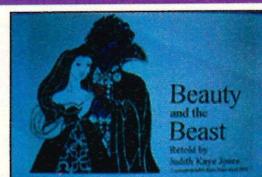
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Title Dark Sun: Shattered Lands
Publisher SSI/US Gold
Contact (021) 625 3366
Price £45.99

Dark Sun: Shattered Lands

In SSI's latest role-playing spectacular, you must escape the gladiatorial arena. But, more importantly, can this game escape cliché city?

Eek! I'm being attacked by huge mutant porcupines. Is that Chernobyl I can see on the horizon?

The inventory screen in all its glory. The insectoid thingy is me, by the way. Watch out for those mandibles, boys!

SSI, holder of the official AD&D licence, has achieved considerable success with its role-playing games, notably the Gold Box and Eye of the Beholder series. However, all games begin to look dated after a while, and so a new game engine has been developed. The first game to appear is Dark Sun, which not only uses the new engine but is also set in a different game world. Dark Sun takes place on Athas, a once fertile planet which has been laid waste by injudicious use of magic. In the past, powerful wizards discovered a way of drawing energy from the sun, but after thousands of years the sun became unstable and the seas evaporated. The harsh conditions resulted in an even harsher society, dominated by draconian city states. A large proportion of the population was enslaved, and any fit



and healthy individuals were forced to fight in the arena as gladiators. A few isolated villages gave sanctuary to escaped slaves, but with water shortages and the constant threat of being attacked by vicious monsters and bands of slavers, life became extremely tough.

Dark Sun contains mercifully fewer clichés than other RPGs. Athas has its share of elves, halflings and dwarves, but they tend to be bigger and tougher than those found in the majority of fantasy games. For a start, the dwarves don't have beards: they're all bald and hairless, and — shock — some of them are even female. The rest of the Athasian popula-

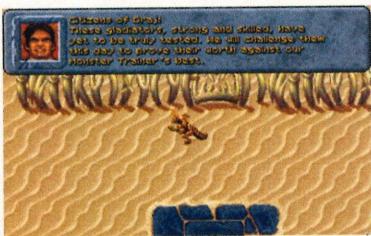
To say that Athas is a harsh world is putting it mildly. One minute you're fighting for your life in the desert, the next you've been bundled away to fight for your life in the arena. Doesn't look like you can win, does it?



tion is less familiar. You won't find any orcs or goblins here (hurrah!), since most of the desert life-forms are insectoid in appearance. When picking characters for your party, you can choose from the usual humans, elves, halflings and dwarves, but there are also thri-kreen (giant mantis-like creatures), half giants or muls (tough human/dwarf hybrids which have the height of a human along with the strength and constitution of a dwarf).

At the start of the game, your characters have been enslaved and are forced to fight in the arena at Draj, one of the main Athasian towns. Your first objective is to escape. To begin with, you may fight as

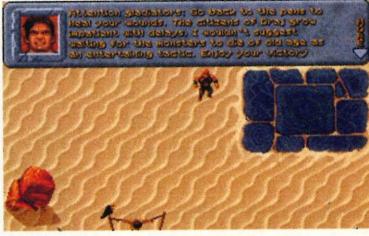
Two Minutes of holidays in the sun



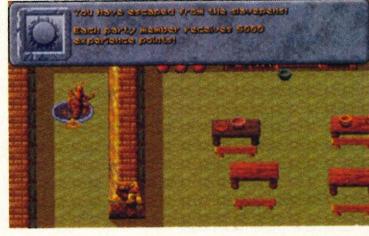
You start the game by being unceremoniously chucked in at the deep end, ie, the arena. It's as simple as kill or be killed. The first few fights aren't too testing, and if you lose any characters at this stage, I'd advise starting again.



This nasty selection of monsters are your first opponents. Get your weaker characters to stand well back and pepper them with arrows while the fighter types move in close and smack 'em over the head with clubs. Search the corpses for additional weapons.



After you've won the fight (a doddle), collected the money thrown to you by the grateful audience and ignored the announcer's sarcastic remarks (you can make him eat his words later in the game), it's time to go back to the slave pens and get some kip.



After a few fights, you're thoroughly bored with the whole affair, and decide to escape down this handy manhole into the sewers. Don't try it until you've gained some experience in the arena, because the guards will duff you up good and proper.

many times as you wish, which enables you to build up experience points before venturing out into the desert. However, since most of the experience points are gained by completing quests rather than fighting monsters, I don't advise going out of your way to kill things until your characters have advanced somewhat.

Dark Sun has a fairly straightforward plot, but the game itself is non-linear. Once you've escaped from the arena, you have the freedom to go and explore. You'll be given a few clues as to what you ought to be doing next, but you're by no means limited to performing a set task at a certain time. If you were to get stuck, for instance, it's possible to go off and do something completely different before

returning to the problem. Having said that, I didn't come up against anything which had me stumped for any length of time, and even if you do make a mistake, it's nearly always possible to fight your way round a situation.

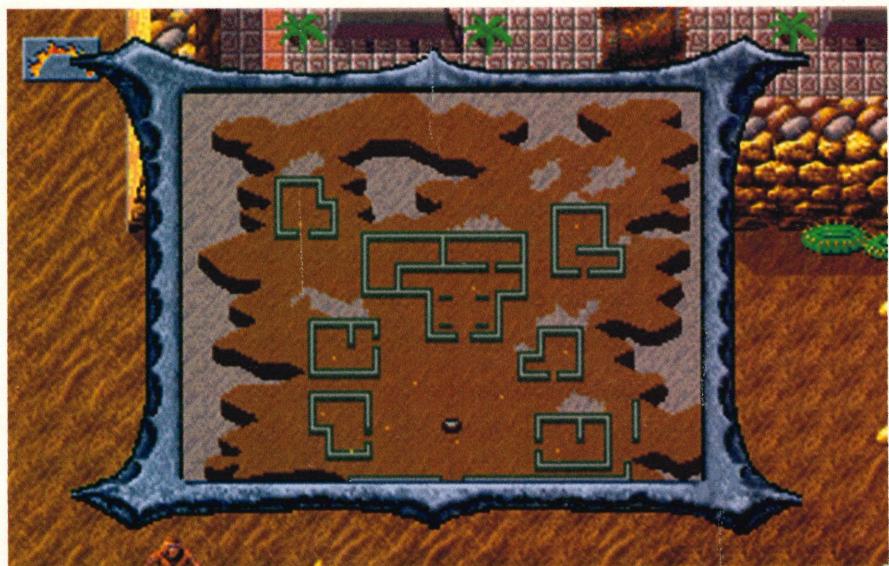
The nice thing about Dark Sun is that you don't have to be an AD&D addict to be able to get into it. If you want to spend three hours rolling up a party of incredibly well balanced characters, you can, but if you'd rather not, there's a pre-generated party readily available. If you want to handle the combat yourself, that's fine too, but you also have the option to let the computer control your characters during a fight. Basically, you can get as involved in the game as you wish: a detailed knowledge of the Athasian flora and fauna isn't mandatory. All you need to know is that if it's bigger than you, kill it; if it's the same size, talk to it first – and then kill it anyway.

The graphics are nothing special, but they are, at least, clear and colourful. Dark Sun is much easier on the eye than the Gold Box games and, whilst it isn't as pretty as Origin's Ultima VII and Serpent



Isle, the scrolling is faster and less jerky. The sprites are fairly small and the animation isn't exactly realistic, but it isn't awful either. If you have a slower machine, you have the option to turn the animations off altogether, and although characters look a bit strange gliding

If you thought it was hot in the desert, try walking across red-hot lava flows in your bare feet. It's enough to make a fakir wince.



Alternatively...



Serpent Isle
Origin, £44.99
Rated 7, Issue 20
The second Ultima VII game is awesomely huge, both in terms of disk space used and playing time. It's wonderfully atmospheric, with an involving plot, attractive graphics and a decent soundtrack, but it's also quite tough and could prove daunting to novices. The only problems are jerky scrolling and slow disk accessing, but if you've got a fast PC it's well worth getting.



Eye of the Beholder II
SSI/US Gold, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 4
Even bigger and better than the original, this game has all the puzzles, monsters and atmosphere that you could ever want in a role-playing game. It's based on AD&D rules, but you don't have to be familiar with them beforehand in order to play it. Although it isn't as sophisticated as Origin's Underworld series, it's still hugely playable and extremely entertaining.

REVIEWS

Right: Select the spells you wish to cast from this screen, and then place the cursor over the monster you want to attack.

Below: Aha! A camp. Clicking on the campfire with the "look" icon enables you to rest your party.

Bottom: Things come big in the desert, including the caravans. Just what kind of creatures grow big enough to pull this baby? No, no, I don't want to find out, after all.

around, it does speed things up somewhat. In default mode, only one member of the party is visible whilst travelling around, but all four characters appear as soon as you become involved in a fight. Owners of faster PCs can change this so that the whole party is on screen at all times, but it doesn't serve any real purpose other than to add a little extra realism to the game.

Combat is turn-based rather than real-time. This is quite handy if you suddenly feel the need to, erm, powder your nose in the middle of a fight (some of those monsters are pretty scary, right?) because your computer is happy to sit and wait for your next command. This may not be the most exciting way of conducting a battle, but at least you won't end up getting wiped out because you dropped coffee in your lap at a crucial moment and had to go and change your trousers.

Spell casting is also easy to get to grips with. In the Eye of the Beholder games, you had to prepare your spells each time you made camp. This system was not terribly satisfactory because often enough, the spells you'd painstakingly prepared proved about as much use as a plimsoll line on a hovercraft. In Dark Sun, every spell you learn is always available providing you have enough magic points to cast it. Another difference between this and other RPGs is that all characters can cast spells. Mages, or preservers, as they're known on Athas, have their own special brand of magic, as do clerics, but all



Athasians possess psionic powers (telepathy, telekinesis, and so on) which can be used to harm or heal during combat.

The interface is one of the best I've seen in an RPG. Dark Sun is designed to be played using the mouse, and although there are some hot keys included, you can't play the game using the keyboard alone. The mouse is used to control the three main actions: walking, fighting and examining objects. Clicking on the right mouse button cycles through these actions, whilst clicking on the left button implements them. Looking at a door, for example, will also enable you to open it unless it is locked. Looking at one of your party members brings up the inventory screen, and looking at another character enables you to talk to him.

Other options can be brought up by clicking on the Dark Sun icon at the top left of the screen. From here, you can cast spells, check character health, examine inventories or even access the overhead map. Needless to say, the map is extremely useful. It shows each level or area in its entirety rather than just the parts you have explored (despite what it says in the manual), and monsters and non-player characters show up as red dots. By clicking on part of the map, you zoom in on that area, so you can see if a dot represents a large beastie with tentacles and razor sharp teeth, or a friendly humanoid.

I only have one major complaint, and that is the amount of time it takes to load and save games. Let's just say that the process wasn't exactly instantaneous. Bringing up the inventory screen also takes more than a few seconds, which didn't seem very satisfactory to me. Installing Smartdrv improves matters slightly, but not as much as I'd hoped. Obviously, the faster your hard drive, the less of a problem you'll have.

In all, Dark Sun is a good product. It isn't outstanding by any means, but it's well-presented and the gameplay was good enough to keep me quiet for a few days. The new game engine wasn't as revolutionary as I'd hoped, but it's a whole lot better than the Gold Box game engine and the interface seems to have been well thought out. If you're looking for something to impress your friends with, I'm not sure that this is the game for you, but if you're after a bit of solid entertainment, Dark Sun won't disappoint you.

■ Cal Jones



Techspec

You need a 386SX with 2Mb RAM minimum, but a

386DX with 4Mb RAM is recommended. DOS 5 minimum, and a Microsoft compatible mouse is required. Smartdrv will improve performance. The ProAudio Spectrum soundcard is also supported.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	17Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
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Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	x	Keyboard	x	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	40MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	580K

Verdict

Entertaining, if not breathtaking

rating
7

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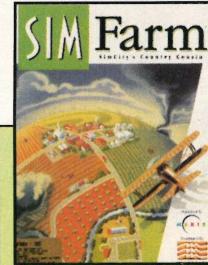
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Title	SimFarm
Publisher	Maxis/Mindscape
Contact	(0444) 246333
Price	£34.99

This farm, deep in the heart of Texas, may be unambitious, with eight healthy cattle, and a couple of fields of corn, but it is beginning to recoup its initial investment.



That wriggly worm in the corner of the field means I've got a problem with pests. Time to spray the lot with pesticide, and to hell with the environmental consequences.

SimFarm

Now you can retire to the country with your proceeds from running Sim City and set up a market garden, or become a rancher, in Maxis's latest occupational strategy game, SimFarm

SimFarm is the rural component of what publisher Maxis hopes will eventually be a complete Sim-world, in which you will be able from your Simmed City to zoom in by so many levels that you play Sim House, then Sim Room, and so on. Presumably, SimFarm is where you scroll out to past the outskirts of your city.

In SimFarm you must manage up to 24 different crops and four different types of livestock, making sure the crops don't succumb to pests, rot, weeds or drought, and that the animals stay well-fed and watered. In time, you should be able to expand your farm, and become wealthy. To begin the game, you either choose to place your smallholding in a region of the

United States, or design your own environment. With your farm placed just out of town and \$40,000 in the bank, it's time to buy a silo to store your crops, tractor, plough and harvester and start sowing that seed. Of the 24 crops, 16 are available at any one time in the game for purchase. You buy the seed, select an area to act as the field and watch the program go through the manoeuvres of ploughing and planting. The crop gradually turns green as it matures and various symbols overlaid on the field warn you if there's too much or too little water (irrigation and drainage will cure this), too few soil nutrients (spray with fertiliser), or pests, weeds, or disease. The manual and on-screen help go into some detail about the conditions preferred by, say, gladioli over soya beans, so that you shouldn't have much difficulty choosing what to grow.

After harvest, you can store the crop in your silo, sell it immediately, or sell it on the futures market: if the market price is currently high, guarantee to harvest so much top-notch barley, for example, and sell it when ready at the current price. Whichever way, you need to keep that



The buying screen deals with machinery, outbuildings, livestock and crops. Here's where you can build up your livestock. Once you've bought four or five, hopefully they will breed to produce more stock for the farm.

Two Minutes of pure corn



If you don't want the hassle of manually spraying the fields, you can set the program to carry this out at regular intervals automatically. Here you can also check the progress of your crop.



At harvest time, your combine harvester comes out to gather up the crop. The harvest is then stored in the silo until you decide to sell it, either immediately, or you can wait to see if the price goes up.



And yes, despite all the dire warnings while the crop was growing, I can sell this corn for just over \$1,000. I'll take the money and concentrate on raising the next batch.



\$40,000 topped up, since buying seed, planting, spraying and harvesting all costs money. You could spend all your playing time reacting to on-screen problems as they pop up, or you can set schedules to get the program to do it all for you, so that using the separate scheduling window, the crop is fertilised, de-pested and weeded at regular intervals. However, toxic damage to fields is also taken into

Having bought your buildings, such as this barn, place it somewhere by clicking on the desired site. Cattle will be more healthy — and thus more valuable — if they have a barn to shelter in.

account by the program, so you need to balance keeping the crop healthy with letting fields lie fallow occasionally.

You can then turn your attention, finances permitting, to expanding the farm by buying adjacent land, and raising livestock — either horses, cattle, pigs or sheep. With proper care, they will breed and can be sold for a tidy profit.

The research and attention to detail in SimFarm — though more on the crops than the livestock side of things — is admirable, but I found the budgetary restrictions got in the way of playing and experimenting with the game too often. Frankly, I don't enjoy being told all the time that I don't have enough money for a water tower, or more land, or that my taxes are due to be paid in three months time — it's too much like real life.

This is a personal view, but it detracted from the interesting part: growing things and seeing what happened, and how far you could tamper with nature (disasters such as a plague of locusts, floods or tornadoes are available, should you wish to

wipe out your farm completely). Having to ensure that I'm not sending the market value of my combine harvester plummeting by using it to gather sub-standard crops just isn't very exciting.

SimCity and A-Train both succeeded because there was a large element of fun — and you got a nice warm glow from setting up the environmental conditions and then watching the communities grow. SimFarm both seem to err too much on the heavy side — more educational tool, perhaps, than game.

■ Christina Erskine

Techspec

The publisher's minimum spec is a 12MHz 286 with

640K RAM. Don't even think about it — it runs, but unresponsively and with constant hard disk access. I'd recommended a 386 and more importantly 1Mb or more of RAM.

Disk requirements

High density	x
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	4.3Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	✓	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	x	Keyboard	x	Mouse	✓
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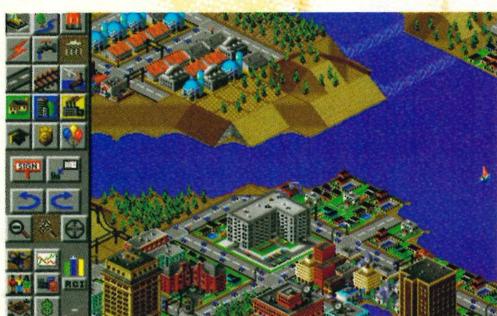
Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz 386
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	520K

Verdict

One mainly for the agricultural economists' lobby

rating
5



Sim City 2000

Maxis/Mindscape, £TBA

Although not due out until after Christmas, the new-look SimCity 2000 looks promising. New features include mass riots by the sims, an alien spaceship on the disaster list, the option to build a subway system to ease traffic congestion and the ability to raise and lower terrain.



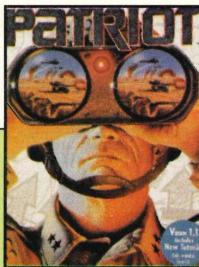
SimLife

Maxis/Mindscape, £39.99

Rated 6, Issue 17

Very similar to SimFarm in looks, the object here is to create the right environment for organisms to evolve and flourish in an eco-system. It has a complex model which, like SimFarm, leans more towards the educational than entertaining.

Alternatively



Title	Patriot
Publisher	Three-Sixty Pacific/EA
Contact	(0753) 549442
Price	£44.99

Patriot puts you right in the military hot seat, with a wealth of tactical information to hand. But finding the actual game underneath all this can be a tough job ...

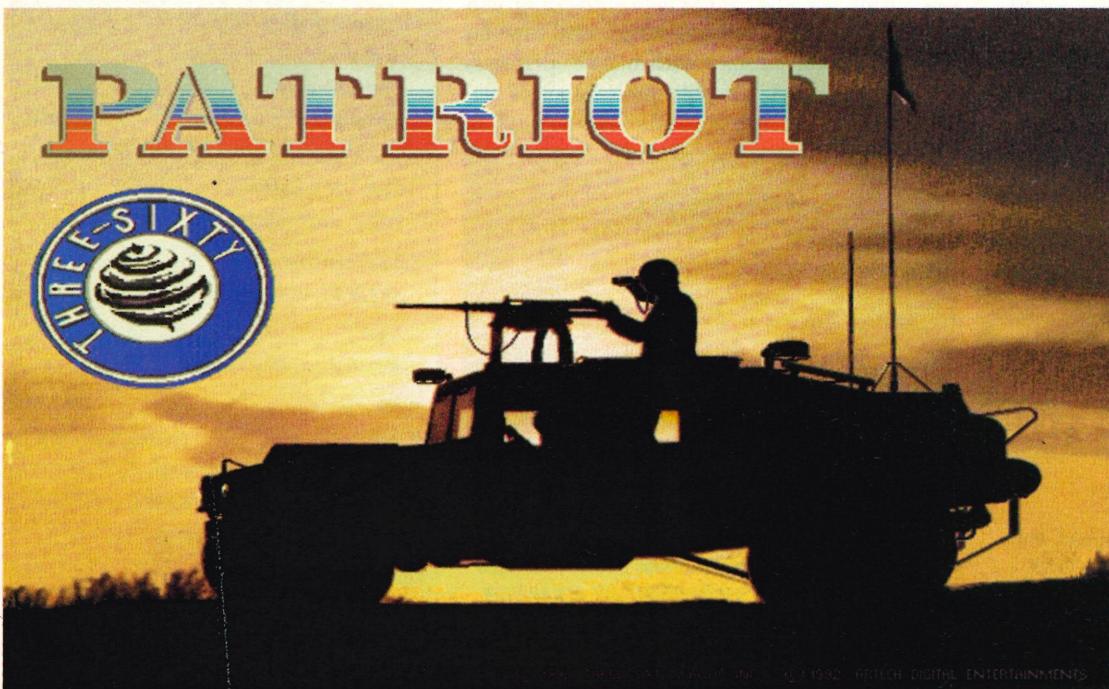
Patriot

Patriot is a military simulation of the Gulf War. I hesitate to call it a 'war game'. It is one, but it's unlike any other I've ever played, and to describe it as a 'game' of any kind seems rather inappropriate, if not flippant: it's thoroughly serious, massively detailed and very difficult. It is probably the most accurate commercial military simulation yet devised, and if you are an aspiring staff officer anxious to test your command theories on a hypothetical model, this is the product for you. If, on the other hand, you are a games player, I have my doubts.

Only two years on from Desert Storm, we're inundated with Gulf War games. What is the attraction of simulating the most one-sided conflict of modern times?

The concept behind Patriot is radical. The designers have tried to shed the baggage of the board game ethos and start from scratch with a view to tapping the massive potential of the PC. As with all Three Sixty Pacific products, the documentation and presentation are first class,

with high standard SVGA graphics. War games must be fought on maps, but there is no hex grid. Units are represented on the map by symbols, but the actual space they occupy is not defined by hexes or squares. As commander, you set physical boundaries on scale maps within which units can deploy, using the mouse to drag over and redraw their spheres of operation. This is fiddly and hard to master. The enemy appears on the map in the same manner, but, unlike in the traditional war game, you cannot move to an adjacent 'square' and then attack, because adjacency is no longer a workable concept, and anyway the game functions at a higher level. You're not concerned with the usual calculations of abstract combat 'factors', or with moving units physically through a constant grid; rather, you are occupied exclusively with command decisions. These involve defining the inter-relationships of units under your command (who is in the front line, who is in reserve, who gets what artillery/air support and priority supply), determining the 'posture' of your troops (if a unit is attacking it behaves more aggressively than if it is defending), and selecting the unit boundaries, objectives



Two Minutes of sand blasting



The map shows the whole theatre of war and in the bigger scenarios, it will shortly be covered by a maze of unit boundaries. My first job is to assign air support to my units.



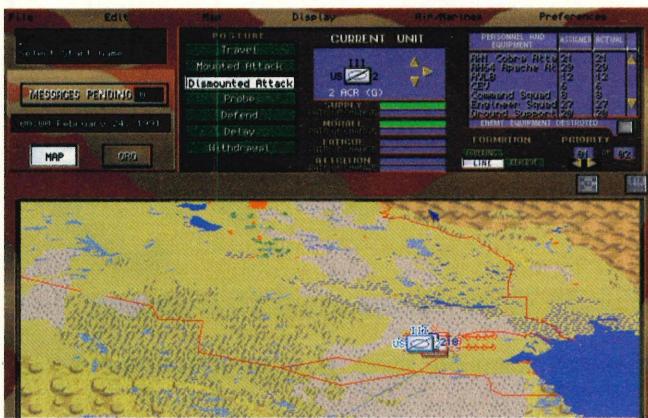
This is the organisational chart, detailing the command structure of my units. It's up to me to chose their formations (frontline, reserve, etc) and match them to the correct posture.



It's vitally important to know the strengths and weaknesses of your troops. Click on any unit and full details of its equipment and effectiveness will automatically appear.



Meanwhile back at the battle: the map on the right continues to give the large picture, while on the left I'm focused on the core operations. So far it appears to be plain sailing.



and paths of advance. You're not going to get technicolor explosions every time an enemy tank explodes. If you did, you'd be too busy to notice.

To quote the designers, this is "an ambitious simulation of a complex reality". You can say that again. An experienced keyboard strategist, I have to confess I found Patriot sticky and sometimes baffling. I hesitate to criticise, because the amount of work that has gone into its development is so enormous that I'm impressed to the point of being

In Patriot it's sand, sand everywhere. As it comes in any colour so long as it's yellow it can get very confusing.

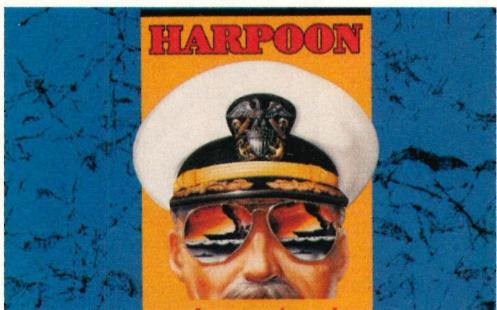
awed. At one level, this game system is original and ought to signify a potential quantum leap out of the war games ghetto. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite deliver. I suspect that it might be too radical, and that the baby may have been thrown out with the bath water.

For me, there are two fundamental things missing. The first is a sense of challenge. Yes, Patriot is challenging, but the satisfaction lies in accurately performing procedures, not in winning the game. The Gulf War was so one-sided, and this reproduction is so faithful, that there's never any question of who's going to win. For this reason, no two-player option is provided because, as the designers rightly point out, who is going to want to play the Iraqis? The aim of the game is to secure your objectives while sustaining minimum casualties. This is very laudable, but it's not very exciting, and that is my second major criticism.

Playing Patriot just isn't enjoyable enough for me, and I think it's been a victim of its own high standards of detail. Much as I admire the skill of the

programming, it didn't get its hooks into me the way a top class strategy game should. It succeeds brilliantly in its own terms, but mere playability wasn't included in the brief, and I found myself yearning for something simpler, even at the expense of accuracy. Modern warfare is an involved and immensely complex business, and Patriot reproduces this all too perfectly. The job of a commander would seem to be 10 parts drudgery to one part glamour, and only a fanatical militarist would have it any other way. But as a fanatical games player, I could do with those ratios being reversed.

■ Simon Shaw



**Harpoon
EA, £39.99**

Patriot is touted as a land-based equivalent of Harpoon (even the packaging has been copied) and both games demonstrate the same massive attention to detail. The naval game, however, is infinitely more playable and better balanced on the whole. Harpoon 2 was demoed recently at ECTS and looks very impressive indeed. Watch this space.



V for Victory series
Three Sixty Pacific, V for V 1 and 2 £34.99 each, V for V 3 £44.99, V for V 4 £39.99
This series shows all the evidence of the board game influence from which Patriot tries to distance itself. The games are hex-based and complex, absorbing and challenging. For my money, these remain the best war games on the market. The fourth in the series, Gold Juno Sword, is reviewed this issue on page 115.

TechSpec

Unfortunately, though not at all surprisingly,
Patriot is somewhat processor-intensive. It will run on a 386SX, but a 486 is recommended, particularly for the bigger scenarios, of course.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	5Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✗	SVGA	✓		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✗	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	595K
Free RAM required	4Mb

Verdict

Ambitious and original, but seriously flawed

rating **5**



Title The Blue and the Gray
Publisher Impressions
Contact (071) 351 2133
Price £39.99

The Blue and the Gray is a large-scale, ambitious war game set in the American Civil War. It's impressively detailed, attractively presented and well documented, undoubtedly the best thing of its kind Impressions has produced to date. However, it still has a number of maddening features which conspire to deaden its impact.

The root cause is one common to many strategy games: more, in this context, simply does not mean better. The designers have thrown in everything except the kitchen sink, but they've failed to come up with a coherent answer to the most crucial question – at which level are they attempting to simulate the war?

What they've produced is a game fought out in two completely different and non-complementary environments.

The first is strategic, where divisions are moved over a tiny square grid on a large-scale campaign map of the entire United States; the second is tactical, where the basic unit of manoeuvre is small groups of men, and the map is of the isometric variety. These two kinds of games have nothing whatsoever in common. The strategic one is much more interesting.

The problem with the tactical game is that it uses Impressions' hoary old Micro Miniatures system, first seen in Rorke's Drift and more latterly refined in Cohort II. Fortunately, this newest incarnation has shed much of the habitual tweeness, but I can't help feeling that there must be something fundamentally wrong with a portmanteau system which can be applied to any tactical situation from 200BC to the 19th century inclusive.

The Blue and the Gray

Although the American Civil War is one of the most popular war gaming periods, there are surprisingly few computer simulations. Can Impressions fill the void?

Right: The Blue and the Gray is certainly comprehensive, with a full database to keep you informed as historical events unfold.

Top right: As well as fighting ad hoc engagements, you can recreate the battle of Bull Run on the tactical map.

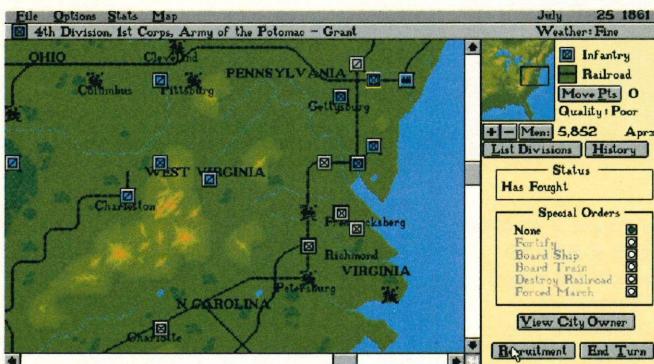
The controls are clumsy and handling the battles is an unwieldy and unsatisfactory business. Though superficially similar to Fields of Glory, MicroProse's Napoleonic game is both more straightforward and more sophisticated: simply put, it's better designed.

If only the tactical game in the Blue and the Gray had been pitched at the Brigade level, where FOG operates. Then the unit of manoeuvre on the large-scale map would have been the corps, which makes excellent sense, and not the division, which makes no sense at all.

It might be argued that this is an unfair, over-detailed criticism, as the Impressions house style is more geared to fun than realistic war games. However, claims of authenticity litter the packaging and there's no doubt that the designers have attempted something new and altogether more complex. They've only partially succeeded, but there are enough glimpses of quality to suggest the potential for a very good game indeed.

It is possible to play at the strategic level only and to have the tactical battles resolved automatically, but in this case the results generated by the computer are somewhat too wacky for comfort.

If, though, the American Civil War is your period, then this may be the only



This is the campaign map, where you plan and execute your strategy. It's important to fortify and defend key cities and to control vital rail and river communications.



TechSpec

You really need a 20MHz 386SX at least for any multimedia games: and a sound card and CD-ROM drive to play this game.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	4Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	25MHz
Minimum memory	550K

Verdict

Not quite on target

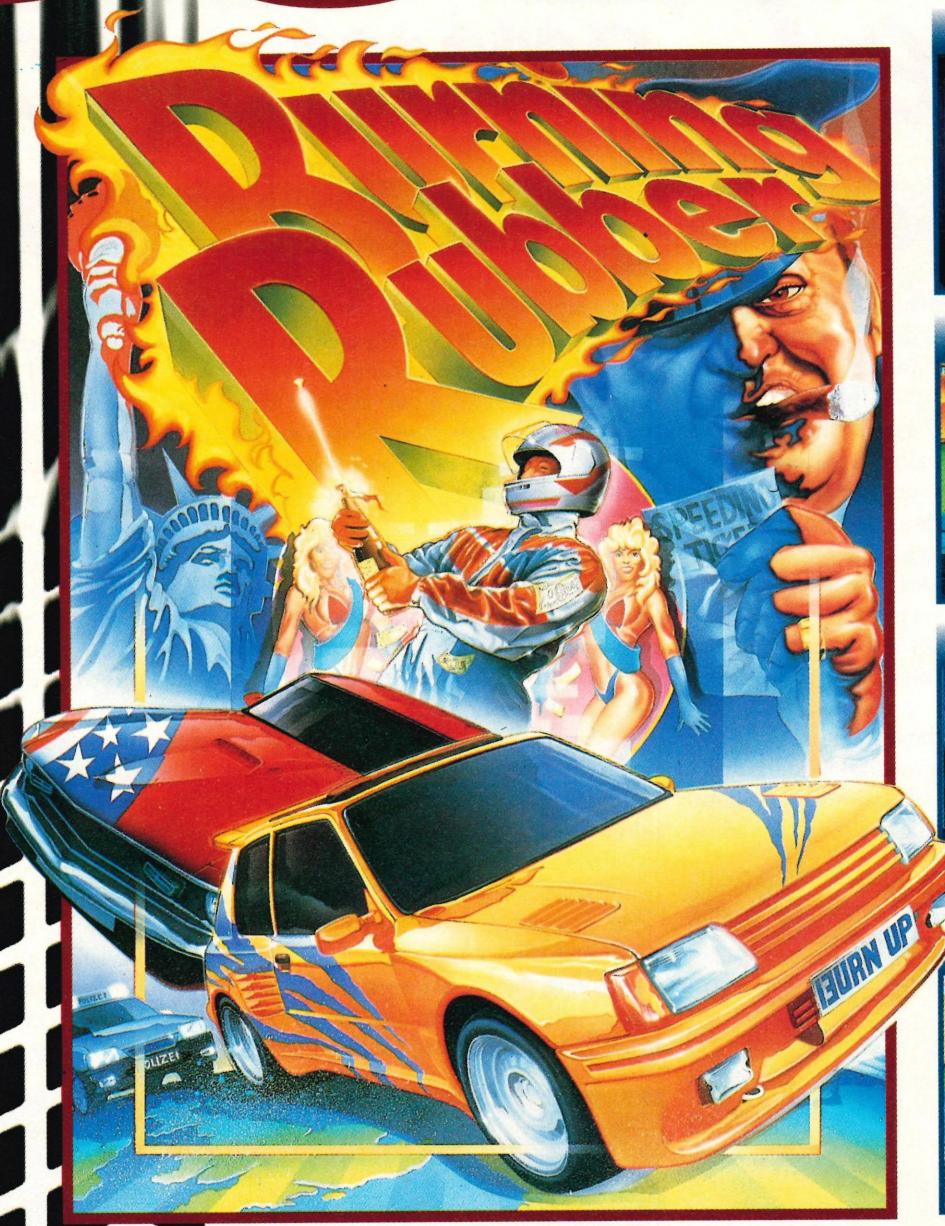
rating

6

game in town. Alas, both Sid Meier and Three-Sixty Pacific seem to have put their ACW projects on the back burner.

■ Simon Shaw

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Title Strike Commander: Tactical Operations
Publisher Origin
Contact (0753) 549442
Price £19.99

Here's an innovation ... rather than simply having a wing man (or woman) thrust upon you, you can choose your own. This, presumably, is one of the privileges of being in command.



Strike Commander: Tactical Operations

Your new steed – the F-22 Lightning II. Purely an air interceptor, the F-22 isn't burdened by any heavy ground assault weaponry. In fact, it wasn't burdened by anything at all for very long under my expert guidance, as I regularly wiped it out during my first mission. Still, at least this stopped Miguel complaining about the scarcity of spare parts.

When Strike Commander first arrived in PC Review's office about six months ago, I approached the task of reviewing it with some trepidation.

After all, having topped the hype charts for almost two years during its gestation period, this is one program which eventually arrived at its destination hard disk with an excess of anticipation attached.

For once, though, most of the pre-release hyperbole was justified, with Strike Commander weighing in as one of the most entertaining and durable releases of 1993.

Now comes the inevitable 'data disk', an 11 megabyte collection which allows the user to rejoin his or her old squadron

(using all of the character stats built up in the original game if so required) to take part in up to 21 new missions.

In addition, there's a new plane to master (the F-22), new enemies to conquer (F-117s, F-4s and B-1s) and some new technical polish, including dual joystick and general MIDI support.

Tactical Operations takes up where Strike Commander left off – only six months in the future. This time-shift is cunningly conveyed by the use of a clever new caption which precedes the new missions ... "Istanbul, six months later".

After this you're on your own. Very much on your own, in fact, as you start these new missions exactly where you finished the old, in sole charge of the Wildcats, without any help from your departed mentor, James 'Hawk' Stern.

The rest of the gang, however, is still very much alive and kicking: Tex is still your buddy, Billy is still a pain in the 'six', Gwen still fancies you and Miguel still complains he's having trouble keeping

the squadron in the air (he is, if you will, Strike Commander's very own 'Scotty').

True SC fans, I suppose, will be happy to be reunited with all of their old friends and adversaries, but for me the re-introduction of the same old cast and the same old group dynamics are symptomatic of the main problem with this add-on when all the new cosmetics are brushed aside, it's nothing more than 11 megabytes more of the same old thing.

This, of course, will be manna from heaven for the die-hard Strike Commander fanatic who felt a great gaping hole enter his or her soul when the original missions ran out.

But for the rest of us? Twenty quid is a lot of money to spend on an add-on disk which offers very little by way of variety, innovation or surprise.

The original Strike Commander was as appetising as Christmas lunch – Tactical Operations, on the other hand, is turkey sandwiches on Boxing Day.

■ Ciarán Brennan

TechSpec

lowest possible spec of the original game. That said, the whole kit and caboodle occupies an obscene amount of precious data space.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	11Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	✓	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	✓		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	4Mb
Free RAM required	586K

rating
7

Verdict

A bonus for SC junkies, an unnecessary extravagance for everyone else



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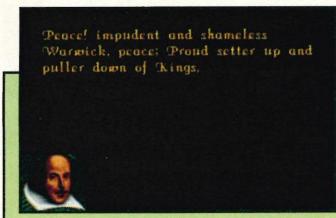
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Title	Kingmaker
Publisher	US Gold
Contact	(021) 625 3366
Price	£37.99



Kingmaker

The board game Kingmaker has been around since the early 70s, and this new computer version is a faithful rendition of the original – but is it perhaps a little too faithful?

As if the prospect of violent death isn't enough, there's also plague. It's just hit Plymouth, but luckily my nearest noble is safely tucked up in a castle to the north.

If you don't fancy controlling the battle, you can fall back on the board game mechanism and trust to luck. I've got 230:70 here (3:1) which is my kind of odds.

Kingmaker is a game of ruthless strategy and intrigue set during the Wars of the Roses, played on a colourful map of England divided into irregular squares. You control a baronial faction and your object is to seize a royal heir, defeat up to five other factions, murder their royal heirs and make yours the sole crowned king (hence the title). It's not for the socially well-adjusted, which is probably why I like it. Many of the game mechanisms are highly ingenious.

Take, for instance, the way in which factions are composed. At the start, you are dealt a 'hand', a random set of cards.

Some of these cards represent nobles, the basic playing pieces, and a noble comes with one or more castles and anything from 10 to 100 troops. The rest of your cards are an assortment of titles, offices, bishoprics, ships, etc, which you allocate as you see fit.

In no time at all, you can transform a lowly character like Herbert (one castle and 10 men) into a mediaeval Terminator by giving him an earldom (another 30 or 40 men), an office (Marshal of England brings in a hundred), plus assorted companies of mercenaries. Join him up with a few like-minded psychopaths (and the Middle Ages were full of them) and you're

in business. Trying to keep your forces together will be another matter.

One of the beauties of the game is the way in which, the stronger you get, the more vulnerable you can become. This is because titles and offices come loaded with obligations. The aforementioned Marshal of England is a particular nightmare: having 100 extra troops is all very well, but you can guarantee that just as you're about to swoop on the enemy in Wales there'll be a French raid on the east coast and you'll have to deal with it. And no sooner have you seen to this than the serfs start rebelling for a square deal somewhere else and off you have to go to sort them out. These events are generated once each turn, and they usually end up leaving someone fatally exposed. Kingmaker is a game where all your best-laid plans are bound to go up in smoke.

As the cards are dealt randomly, no two games are alike, and your initial strategy



You've raised your standard and are ready for a tilt at the crown. Be warned, the stakes are high – one false move and the executioner's axe awaits ...

Alternatively...**Powermonger**

Electronic Arts, £34.99

Bullfrog's isometric warfare game is often wrongly thought of as some kind of companion program to *Populous*. It isn't: it's a game of strategic invasion of a fictional land, using economic and social skills as well as more warmongering tactics. For example, you need to keep an eye on food supply and production in the kingdom for people will starve and armies mutiny if famine strikes. It's an epic and idiosyncratic game, which is aesthetically pleasing as well as a stiff challenge, and well worth a look — it's been somewhat underrated.

**Castles II**

Interplay, £34.99

Set in 14th century France, you play one of five nobles attempting to seize the crown after the death of King Charles. The plot is loosely based on the real life events of the time, but the game involves performing administrative, political and military 'tasks'. You need strengthen your domain's economy before you can power off to invade rival territory, and build your castles across the land. Although bigger than the original *Castles*, this sequel suffers from poor presentation, which detracts from the fact that there's a strong tactical game within.

is determined by the luck of the draw. Royal heirs are dotted about the map, and with luck you can nab one in the first few turns. However, the houses of Lancaster and York have strict lines of succession, and if you control, say, Richard of Gloucester, you can't crown him king while his elder brothers and father are still alive. This is where it gets bloody.

There are two kinds of conflict, sieges and battles, and you'll need to engage in both to defeat your opponents and seize all the heirs. Unfortunately, this has always been the weakest aspect of the board game: to win a battle all you have to do is compare the totals of the opposing forces and match a ratio drawn from a card pack (say 3:2 or 5:1). Sieges are even cruder: you just have to assemble a force which equals or exceeds that of the defender and the castle is yours.

To spice up the combat, the designers have therefore included the option to

switch to an isometric battle display where you can slug it out more realistically. As they rightly point out, mediaeval generals exercised very little control over their troops, and the result is that your own input is minimal and the battles end up looking like The Shed taking on the Stretford End. It's a step in the right direction, but I don't think the conversion to the computer format has gone far enough.

Kingmaker is one of the post-Diplomacy breed which involves some interaction, but that's missing here, because the computer version has been designed as a one-player game. The tension and excitement generated by a few human players battling it out over a board is thus absent. US Gold is shortly to release a patch disk (free of charge) with a two-player option, so judgement must be reserved, but as it stands it's lacking in atmosphere. It's also too slow, particularly if you fight against the maximum number of five rival factions.

The problem is that because of the rigid turn structure you only get to have one go in six. You take your move and then you have to sit around twiddling your thumbs for ages while your opponents take theirs. It's particularly frustrating, because the more factions in play the better the game. Fighting against only one faction drastically reduces the waiting time, but it also exposes the deficiencies in the artificial intelligence — whenever I've played at this level the computer has made too many poor moves to give me much trouble.

Despite my reservations, *Kingmaker* is still a fine game and many of its qualities continue to shine through. However, if you haven't played the original you may wonder what all the fuss is about.

■ Simon Shaw

TechSpec

Not too much in the way of problems here with getting *Kingmaker* up and running, but do note that digitised speech is only an option if you already have a Sound Blaster Pro card.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	4Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
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Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	1Mb
Free RAM required	590K

rating

6

Verdict

Better as a board game

Two Minutes of pruning roses

My initial hand is displayed on the right. I've been lucky: Neville gets the Tower of London, which means he can grab the king, while Percy is a real Superman. Bishops are needed to crown pretenders, while the ship is useful for going to France or Ireland.



Talbot's faction launches an immediate assault on Harlech to seize the Yorkist heir Edward of March. The defenders only number 200 to the attackers' 400, so they don't have a chance. It looks like they're going to have to get the builders in.



And this is the price of failure: poor Edward is superfluous to Talbot's requirements and gets the chop. You have the option either to execute any barons who fall into your hands or to hold them for ransom — a useful way of picking up extra cards.



My turn and I've pounced on Talbot's nearest henchman. You give orders to troops by click-dragging the mouse to the area you want to attack, but don't expect them to take much notice. So far it's Blues 2 Reds 1, and we'll be back shortly for the second half ...

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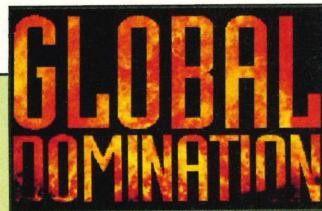
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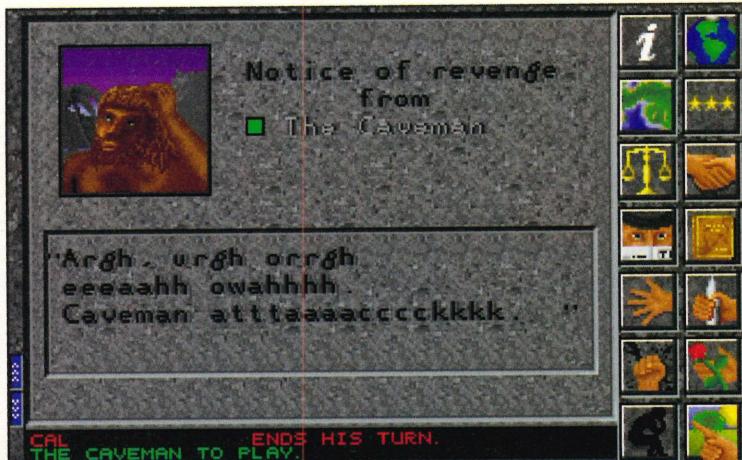
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Title	Global Domination
Publisher	Impressions
Contact	(071) 351 2133
Price	£39.99

With such an unambiguous title, it's not too difficult to guess what this game is all about. Megalomania starts here



Global Domination

Ever wanted to rule the world? Me neither. All that worrying about defence budgets, assassination attempts and who's going to invade you next is enough to keep anyone awake at night. Let's face it, it's enough of a hassle trying to decide what you're going to eat for lunch. But what if you could rule the world from the safety of your own home? Well, that's another matter.

Global Domination gives you the stunning opportunity to test your military know-how to the limit, and you've still got time to nip into the pub for a quick pint afterwards.

In case you hadn't guessed, Global Domination is world conquest simulation. It's rather like the Risk board game. Starting with a handful of small territories, the general idea is to expand your empire by creating armies and then use

them to take over neutral or enemy controlled zones. In the most basic terms possible, you have a certain amount of units to spend which you may allocate to troops or transport. The more you spend on transport, more often you can move each turn. Each army is restricted to one move per turn, but you can create as many armies as you want, providing that you have the resources to do so. The more territories you control, the greater the amount of resources you have available to you. And so on.

I realise I've made it sound incredibly dull, but it's actually quite engrossing. I'd recommend that anyone new to strategy games ought to play Global Domination on the simplest level, but once you're happy with the game you might want to try upping the complexity. On the more advanced levels you can make pacts and alliances with the enemy to give you more

security while you attack other opponents, or you could send out spies and even use subversive activity to start revolutions.

Another option enables you to influence individual battles by taking part via a satellite link. These real-time tactical battles are good fun to play, but they're entirely optional, so if you don't want to get involved, the conflict will be resolved by the computer.

You have the choice of playing Global Domination on your own against computer controlled opponents, or you can take on your friends either on the same PC or via a modem link. There are nine computer controlled opponents, each with

Above: Some of your enemies are less intelligent than others, but none of them will be very chuffed if you keep attacking them.

Below right: If you want, you can use the satellite mode to get directly involved in battles, but since this can make the game a trifle long-winded, this feature is entirely optional.

Alternatively...



Civilization
MicroProse, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 1
The aim is to advance your people from a bunch of Stone Age primitives to a nation of rocket scientists, picking up new technology, exploring your world and grinding rival civilisations into the dust as you go. It's involving, interesting, addictive and even educational, and you don't have to be a strategy buff to enjoy it. If you haven't played it yet, go out and do so. Now.



Battle Isle 93
Blue Byte, £25.95
Rated 7, Issue 21
This futuristic strategy game will appeal to just about anyone. Although hex-based, it's far more accessible than most war games, and all information can be accessed on screen rather than from a hefty manual. The single player game is both absorbing and challenging, but in two player mode it really comes into its own. A well thought-out game with a strong design. Recommended.



REVIEWS



This is one of the randomly generated worlds, and I'm up against some stiff opposition. Unconquered territories are brown, whilst territories in which a war is taking place are orange. I'm red, so I can't be doing that badly.

their own distinct personalities. The half-witted caveman is the easiest to beat, but the others, who include Bismarck, Julius Caesar, General Custer, Genghis Khan, Henry V, Abe Lincoln, Napoleon and Queen Victoria, are rather more difficult. You'll need different strategies for dealing with each opponent: for example, it's futile trying to make a pact with Genghis Khan because he's likely to break it, whereas Lincoln is a good deal more trustworthy. After a while you'll get the hang of beating them all, which is why it's nice to be able to play against some human opposition for a change.

Another thing that can be changed is the world map. If you get bored with playing the Earth, there's an option to generate random worlds. This takes a little time, but it means that you never have to play

the same world twice, adding some pleasing variety to the gameplay.

All game options are accessed via point and click icons on the right hand side of the screen. The control system is reasonably intuitive on the whole, but even so, Global Domination is not one of those games you simply pick up and play straightaway. You should at least have a quick flick through the manual beforehand, because otherwise you'll

get nowhere fast. Believe me, I've tried. Although I'm not a great fan of manuals (I tend only to read them if it's absolutely necessary), the Global Domination effort was well laid out and I had no trouble finding my way around it.

Global Domination doesn't have the most breathtaking graphics I've ever seen, but a game like this doesn't need them. So long as I can see where everything is without getting an eye-strain induced headache, I'm happy, and Global Domination fills these requirements quite easily. Territories are colour coded according to who is occupying them, and armies are simply represented by bullets. The bigger the army, the larger the bullet, so it's easy to tell if your army is equipped to take on the enemy.

I wouldn't normally expect a game like this to have good sound, but the music in Global Domination isn't bad at all. The game starts with a rather dodgy rendition of Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries (I love the smell of napalm in the morning, and all that) but things improve considerably after that. You can, of course, turn it off if it becomes too distracting.

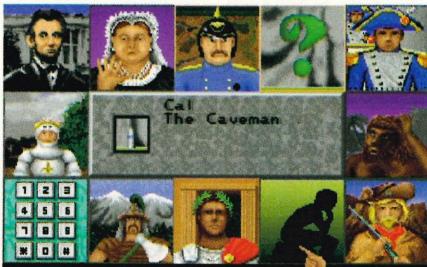
I have to say that I didn't enjoy playing Global Domination quite as much as Civilization, but that's hardly surprising when you consider that Civilization is one of my all time favourite games.

Still, Global Domination has plenty going for it in its own right. It has a strangely addictive quality: I'd get tired of it after playing for a few hours, but after a break I just had to get back to it and give it another shot. Experienced players might find it a bit too simplistic in comparison to other war games, but the multi-player option prolongs its life somewhat. If you enjoy playing Risk or are looking for a good introduction to the strategy genre, look no further.

■ Cal Jones

Two Minutes of risky business

I'm playing at a very basic level here. No treaties, no revolutions, no subterfuge and only a mentally deficient caveman between me and victory. As simple as it gets, but it still isn't easy ...



This screen is where you choose your foes. The shadowy figure represents the player and the question mark picks your enemies at random. The telephone icon (bottom left) is for those playing via the modem link.



At the start of the game, you only have a few territories. I'm playing as red; the caveman, green. At this stage, there are a lot of neutral areas – capture as many of these as possible to increase your resources.



The logistics screen is where you determine the size and mobility of your armies. To form an army, select the type and size you need, return to the main screen, click on the bullet icon and place it using the open hand icon.



I've defeated the troglodyte using very simple tactics. So long as your invading armies are larger than your enemy's defending units, you nearly always win. On the easy level, anyway.

TechSpec

Global Domination runs on a 286 or faster with MS-DOS 3.0 or higher, although Impressions recommends a 386SX or faster and Microsoft compatible mouse to get the best out of it. It also supports the Aria sound card.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	2.8Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	x
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Performance

Optimum speed	16MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	600K

rating

7

Verdict

A good introduction to strategy games

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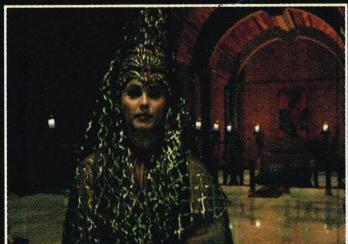
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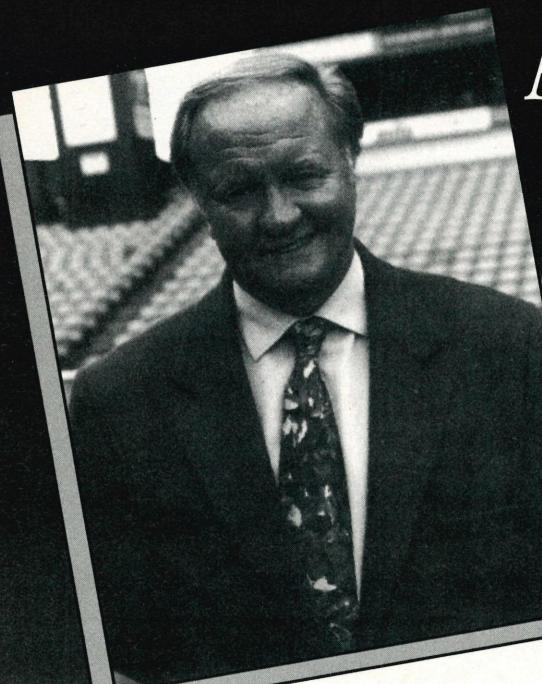
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Title Gold Juno Sword
Publisher Electronic Arts
Contact (0753) 549442
Price £39.99

This is the fourth game in the V for Victory series. The third, Market Garden, was played on a long, thin map like a strip of wallpaper. Gold Juno Sword, by contrast, uses a broad, but shallow, playing area. Nothing else in the game, however, could be described as shallow.

GJS recreates the British/Commonwealth sector of the Normandy landings. All the familiar names are there, from the Orne bridges to Villers-Bocage and back to Caen, the linchpin. These famous actions, and many more, are dealt with in the various scenarios which culminate, as ever, in a massive campaign game.

I'm playing this at the moment from the German side and it's not easy, despite my being able to call on the most powerful units available in the entire series. The Allies' bombardment capacity (air and naval) is a great leveller and the artificial intelligence seems more than adequate. I've read some criticism of the AI in the past, but I've only found it a problem in Velikye Luki, where the map is so vast that the computer occasionally has difficulty with the supply lines. But in GJS there's none of the fluid manoeuvre that you experienced in the earlier game; this is more of an attritional slog through the notorious Normandy hedgerows.

Weather conditions, tactical and strategic information are easy to access as the campaign progresses in GJS.

The German position is looking thin at the moment, but reinforcements are on the way in the shape of the elite 12 Panzer SS Division.

There is no doubt that the V for V system takes time to get the hang of but, once learnt, is remarkably straightforward to use. The manuals, complete with detailed tutorials, are excellent. The interface and controls are faultless. And once you've mastered one game, you can play them all because, apart from a smattering of special rules, there's no real difference between any of them.

This has advantages and disadvantages, of course, but the former out-weigh the latter. Game systems which don't develop often signify lazy designers, but V for V hasn't evolved much simply because it was so well prepared to begin with, it scarcely needed to. The amount of detail may be staggering but it's not overwhelming, and you are able to delegate a number of functions (like air or artillery support) to your computerised 'staff', which leaves you free to get on with the more tactical niceties – and there are easily enough of these to keep you occupied for a fair while.

GJS is a worthy addition to a series which remains, in my opinion, head and shoulders above everything else in the genre. Although the games are hex-based and apparently soaked through with the conventions of board gaming, they nonetheless

TechSpec

GJS will run on a fast 386, but a 486 is recommended.

A maths co-processor is supported. A VESA compatible graphics card (512K) is needed. V for V games are memory-hungry: unless you're happy fiddling with your Config.sys file it's best to play from a boot disk.

Disk requirements

High density ✓

Hard disk only ✓

Space taken on hard disk 4.5Mb

Graphic modes

CGA X EGA X Tandy X

VGA X SVGA X

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓ Roland X Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick X Keyboard X Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed 33MHz

Minimum memory 600K

Free RAM required 3Mb

Verdict

Well up to scratch

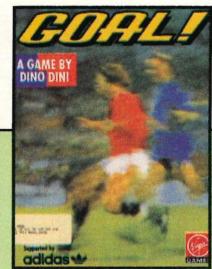
rating

8



Gold Juno Sword





Title	Goal!
Publisher	Virgin
Contact	(081) 960 2255
Price	£35.99

Until recently, "the PC" and "good football games" were rarely mentioned in the same sentence (apart from the phrase, "The PC doesn't have any good football games, does it?"). Prior to Sensible Soccer, the football genre was full of laughable arcade efforts and dull, stat-heavy management games. But if team administration bores you rigid and you still haven't outgrown the dream of scoring a late winner at Wembley, then Goal! from Dino Dini might just provide the goalmouth drama you've been searching for.

Dino Dini is the chap who created Kick Off, a game that wasn't just huge on the Amiga, it was positively gigantic. Kick Off was the football game of all time, combining a frantic 'arcade' free-for-all with a set-piece designer, changeable tactics, a pitch scanner and oodles of gameplay. But when the curtain rose on the long-awaited PC conversion, Kick Off was revealed to be a shocking mess, an unplayable game beset by graphical glitches and an appalling control system.

Although, at first glance, Dino's latest football foray looks to be little more than a re-tweaked Kick Off variant, this time around it's actually very playable. The control method has remained essentially the same, but in Goal! Dino has crammed in a few new additions and, more impor-

Goal!

It looks like it's goodbye America for England and Scotland, at least, so as you wait for the inevitable World Cup axe to fall, why not banish your footballing woes with Dino Dini's Goal!

Although the zoomed out view shows you more of the pitch, the players are too tiny to make playing in this mode a viable option. But it is possible and I had more success this way than in the close-up view.

tantly, some much needed refinements.

If you're a Sensi veteran, the biggest immediate difference is one of scale. As you can see, Goal! has two specific match views: a close-up pitch view and a zoomed-out Sensible Soccer style view. Although the principal gaming view is the close-up, you can swap between the two modes or even play the whole match from the Sensi view.

Of course, as the viewpoint in Sensible Soccer enables you to see more of the pitch, Sensi is often a slower, more strategic game as a result. In Goal! your view of the action is much closer and more immediate. A pitch scanner is helpfully provided as a guide to the positions of your players, but due to the fast pace of the game, it's tricky to watch it with any regularity. What playing this system eventually establishes is team awareness, because as you can't always peek at the scanner it helps to be 'aware' of where your players are.

But if, like me, you're not comfortable stealing brief glances at a pitch scanner, zooming out enables you to see more of

As advance orders for USA World Cup 94 T-shirts are cancelled all over England, I abandon English football altogether, plump for Bayern Munchen and attempt to win the league.



Two Minutes of international humiliation



OK, I've played the odd game, had a quick practice on the field, so I think I'm ready. I've set up a small but perfectly formed league and my first victims are Gascoigne and Lazio.



Barely a minute gone in the first half and Signori slips past my four man defence and my sweeper to slot the ball neatly past my the despairing dive of my keeper. Oh dear.



On throw-ins and free-kicks, the view automatically switches to the zoomed out mode enabling you to plan your tactics more effectively. Once you get the ball, the view reverts.



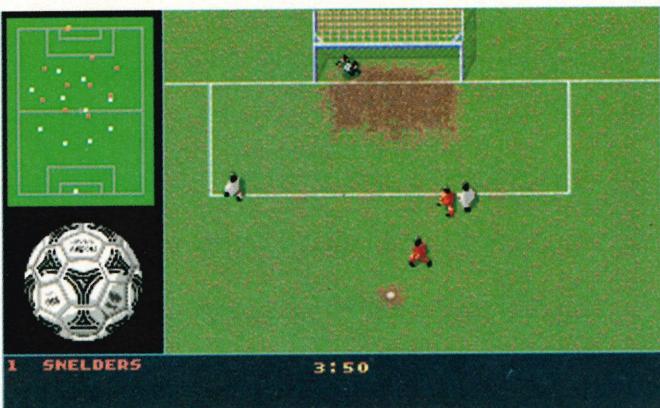
Things are getting desperate and after a rash sliding tackle the ref points to the spot. Bacci calmly taps in number seven before I even have time to dive. Goodbye league title.

so detailed that even the players personal statistics mirror their real life form.

As you will no doubt have guessed by now, Goal! is a much more complicated game than Sensible Soccer. I'm not ashamed to admit that I had a few teething troubles, so much so that the game forced me to switch off the computer, go away for five minutes and actually read the manual.

Goal! is played at a frantic pace and it takes a while before you can settle down and pass the ball around with some semblance of control. But if you persevere, you'll be rewarded with a game that plays much better than it looks.

Once you've mastered it, you'll find that although you have considerably less time on the ball you have more player control than you had in Sensible Soccer. You can trap the ball, chest it down and even perform acrobatic overhead kicks (although I haven't managed it so far). Goal! even gives you the opportunity when defending against a free kick to choose how many players you have in your wall and even where it stands. It's very comprehensive.



Of course, like Sensible Soccer, Goal! has a wealth of options that mean that you can change match length, the skill of the goalkeepers, computer effectiveness, replays and so on. The sound is distinctly average, because the game is mostly silent apart from the sound of the ball bouncing, the ref's whistle blowing and the sporadic 'oohs', 'aahs' and cheers from the expectant crowd.

I feel that Goal! offers the digital footballer the best of both football worlds with close-up arcade action and a Sensi-esque

strategic view. Goal! is really what PC Kick Off ought to have been, but although it's fast-paced and fun I still remain a true-blue Sensi addict. Why? Well, where in Goal! my play was frantic and often devoid of structure, in Sensi you do have more time to play a more attractive style of football. To me, it's simply a lot more satisfying to play.

If you want a little more realism in your arcade football then give Goal! some consideration because it's a great alternative to Sensible Soccer. Now all that remains for me to add is, "Come on, you Poles" and pray for a miracle.

■ **Dean Evans**

TechSpec

Goal! needs 2Mb RAM to run, but it is one of those

programs that should cause you no problems at all. It's a small program (one disk only) and works as well on a slower 386 as it does on a fast 486.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	2Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	X	EGA	X	Tandy	X
VGA	✓	SVGA	X		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	X	Mouse	X
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Performance

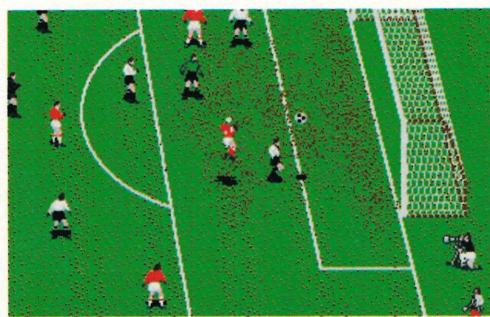
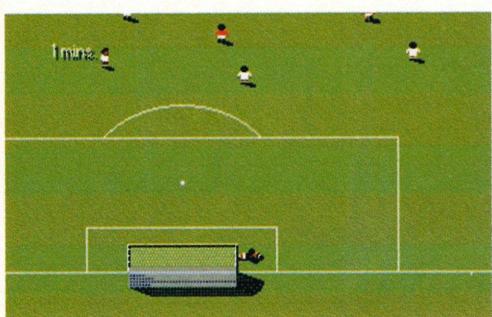
Optimum speed	25MHz 386
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	590K

Verdict

Fast, frantic and a good alternative to Sensible Soccer

rating

7



Alternatively...

Sensible Soccer

Renegade, £34.99

Rated 9, Issue 22

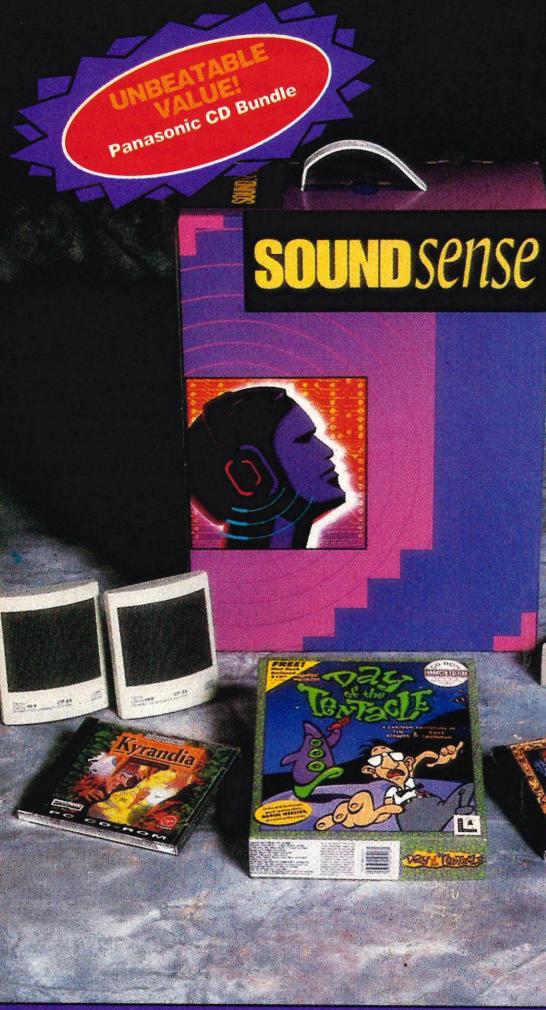
In my opinion, Sensible Soccer is without doubt the best football game on the PC. The use of a wide screen view enables you to play a highly tactical game, and it's fast, frantic and very playable to boot. Sensi is only disappointing in that it falls just a bit short of the stunningly perfect Amiga version.

European Championship 92 Empire (Sports Masters compilation), £34.99

Rated 7, Issue 10

An oldie but still a game capable of putting on a decent show. The gameplay is simple, very basic: there are no team management options, one league and 12 teams. However, if there's two of you it's lots of fun for a while, but a huge question mark hangs over its longevity.

Sounds like a Christmas Cracker!



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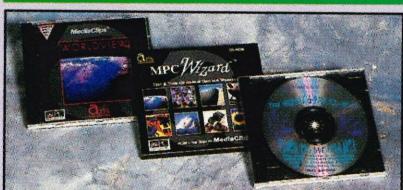
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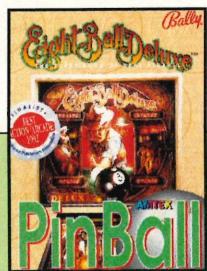
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Title	Eight Ball Deluxe
Publisher	Amtex/Supervision
Contact	(0742) 753423
Price	£34.99

Eight Ball Deluxe

Let's face it, I'm a bit of a pinball addict. I managed to get myself well and truly hooked on 21st Century Entertainment's Pinball Dreams last issue – to such an extent that, six weeks later, my editor was still shouting, "Stop playing that wretched game!" across the office at me. Not surprisingly, I was rather overjoyed when Eight Ball Deluxe turned up on my desk because it meant that I had a legitimate excuse to start practising my flipper skills again.

Unlike Pinball Dreams and Sierra's Take a Break Pinball for Windows, this game is based on a real Bally table. Eight Ball Deluxe (the coin-op) has been sitting in seaside arcades and greasy spoon cafes for over 10 years, and, according to the blurb in the manual, is still very popular.

It's a big, old-fashioned looking table and Amtex has done quite a good job reproducing it on screen. Fans of the original will doubtless be pleased, but to be quite honest, it didn't do a great deal for me. Call me a philistine if you like, but I much prefer modern tables with loads of ramps and ball traps, such as the Nightmare table in Pinball Dreams.

In terms of gameplay, Eight Ball Deluxe is difficult to master. It offers you the option of altering the gradient of the table and the strength of the flippers, but even on the easiest setting it's hardly a doddle. The balls have a nasty tendency to fly straight down the side before you've even

managed to touch them with the flippers, which is extremely frustrating. Each game gives you five balls to play with as opposed to the usual three, but considering that I invariably lost at least two of these almost immediately, it didn't make much difference to my score. Other than that, the game is reasonably accurate.

But can someone please tell me why Eight Ball Deluxe has a "free game" feature? This is all very well if you've just spent half an hour pumping fifty pence pieces into an arcade machine and want some return for your investment, but what the hell's the point if you've already spent £35 on the darned thing? I'm all for authenticity, but this is ridiculous.

Tech Spec

You need a 386SX or better, 256 colour VGA and DOS 3.3 or higher. 1Mb RAM is required for PC speaker sound, or 2Mb if you're using the Sound Blaster. It will run under Windows 3.1 as a DOS application.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	4Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✗	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
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Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
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Performance

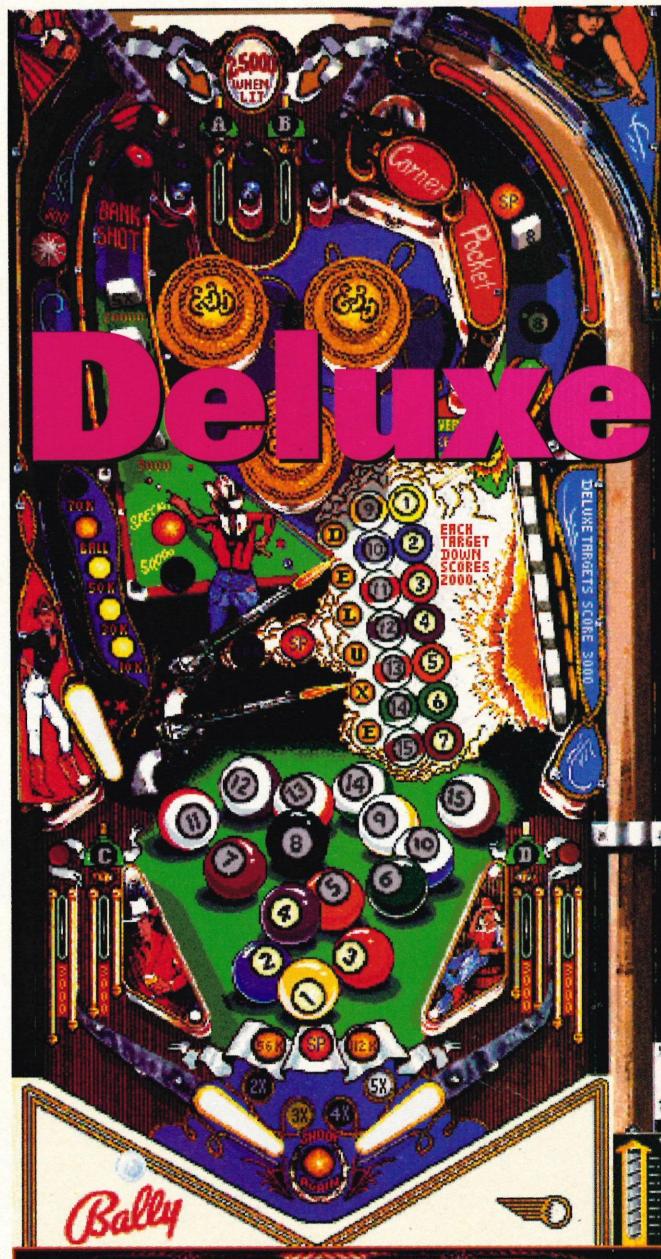
Optimum speed	20MHz
Minimum memory	1Mb
Free RAM required	575K

Verdict

Reasonable, but not outstanding

rating

5



The graphics are fairly good, although they have a tendency to look rather cluttered, and there is some flicker on slower machines. Even so, the game plays at a reasonable speed even on a 386SX, so no complaints here.

The overall impression, however, is of a decidedly average game. Eight Ball Deluxe will appeal to those who have played and enjoyed the arcade machine, but its lack of variety and element of frustration do it no favours at all.

The other drawback is that you only get the one table for your £35, which doesn't strike me as being fantastically good value for money. It doesn't play as well as Pinball Dreams, and, for my money anyway, isn't nearly as enjoyable.

Put it this way: I'll still be playing Dreams long after Eight Ball Deluxe has disappeared from my hard disk.

■ Cal Jones

Lots of targets and flashing lights, but no ramps at all. Shame.

The cafe is actually a cunningly disguised menu. Click on the back of the pinball machine to change options. Click on the table to play. Click on the girl and you get a smack in the gob.



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COVOS SPEECH THING	●	●	●	
DISNEY SOUND SOURCE	●	●	●	
FM SYNTHESIZER - OPL2	●	●	●	
FM SYNTHESIZER - OPL3	●	●	●	
DIGITAL SOFTWARE VOLUME CONTROL	●	●	●	8 STEPS
DIGITAL BASS & TREBLE CONTROL	●	●	●	16 STEPS
SAMPLING RATE, RECORDING UP To:	23KHz	15KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
SAMPLING RATE, PLAYBACK UP To:	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
GAME PORT, WITH MIDI OPTION	●	●	●	●
DYNAMIC FILTERING FOR BETTER SOUND	●	●	●	●
CD AUDIO IN	●	●	●	●
CAN USE MICROPHONE AND CD DURING DIGITAL PLAYBACK	●	●	●	●
SMT BOARD FOR BETTER RELIABILITY	●	●	●	●
FREE SPEAKERS	●	●	●	●
CD-ROM INTERFACE (AT-BUS)				●
PANASONIC INTERFACE				●
MITSUMI INTERFACE				OPTION
SONY INTERFACE				OPTION
CD-ROM INTERFACE (SCSI)				
MICROPHONE AGC AMPLIFIER	●	●	●	●
STEREO MICROPHONE INPUT				
SOFTWARE SELECTABLE IRQ, DMA & ADDRESS SETTING CONFIGURATION RETAINED WHEN POWER OFF				●
MIXER SUPPORT FROM MORE THAN ONE SOURCE DURING RECORDING	●	●	●	●
BUILT-IN AMPLIFIER	●	●	●	●
STEREO LINES IN AND OUT	●	●	●	●

		STEREO				
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Sound Blaster Version 2	●	●	●	●	●	
Sound Blaster Pro II	●	●	●	●	●	
Microsoft Windows Sound System	●	●	●	●	●	
Covos Speech Thing	●	●	●	●	●	
Disney Sound Source	●	●	●	●	●	
FM Synthesizer - OPL3	●	●	●	●	●	
DIGITAL SOFTWARE VOLUME CONTROL	●	●	●	●	●	
DIGITAL BASS & TREBLE CONTROL	●	●	●	●	●	
CD QUALITY SAMPLING RATE, RECORD & PLAYBACK UP To:	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	
GAME PORT, WITH MIDI OPTION	●	●	●	●	●	
DYNAMIC FILTERING FOR BETTER SOUND	●	●	●	●	●	
CD AUDIO IN	●	●	●	●	●	
CAN USE MICROPHONE AND CD DURING DIGITAL PLAYBACK	●	●	●	●	●	
CD-ROM INTERFACE (AT-BUS)	●	●	●	●	●	
Panasonic Interface	●	●	●	●	●	
Mitsumi Interface	●	●	●	●	●	
Sony Interface	OPTION	OPTION	OPTION	OPTION	OPTION	
CD-ROM INTERFACE (SCSI)	●	●	●	●	●	
MICROPHONE AGC AMPLIFIER	●	●	●	●	●	
STEREO MICROPHONE INPUT	●	●	●	●	●	
SOFTWARE SELECTABLE IRQ, DMA & ADDRESS SETTING CONFIGURATION RETAINED WHEN POWER OFF	●	●	●	●	●	
MIXER SUPPORT FROM MORE THAN ONE SOURCE DURING RECORDING	●	●	●	●	●	
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CD-ROM reviews

The latest CD games - both 'enhanced' versions and originals - are put through their paces

Title	Gobliins/Gobliins 2
Publisher	Coktel Vision
Contact	(0276) 684959
Price	£44.99 each

Gobliins/Gobliins 2

Gobliins and Gobliins 2 are a pair of wacky, cartoon-style puzzle games from Coktel Vision. The basic idea behind the games is to solve a series of increasingly bizarre problems using each character's specific skills (in Gobliins you have three of the little imps to control; Gobliins 2 has, well, two).

The humour is excellent, but the problems are extremely difficult to solve. How would you get past a giant, for example? You need to distract him with some food. You have a sausage in your inventory, but that's not enough. What you actually have to do is find a chicken, pick it up by the neck and bludgeon it over the head with the sausage to get it to lay an egg. Weird.

Both games are incredibly quirky, and will not exactly suit everyone. However, I found them intriguing and original and this more than made up for their shortcomings.

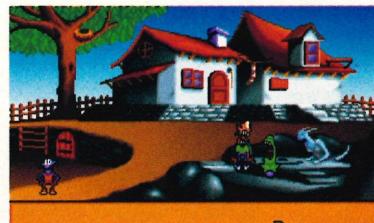
The main advantage of buying Gobliins and Gobliins 2 on CD-ROM is the extra sound. The comic



Gobliins 2 has lots of humour ... just don't tell the RSPCA.

sound effects tie in perfectly with the slapstick humour, and it's almost worth getting just to hear the little chaps muttering in their own special language. Beyond that, there's very little difference between the CD and floppy versions. If you've already played the two games on floppy disk, it's probably worth waiting for Gobliins 3 instead.

■ Cal Jones



There are surprises around every corner.

Techspec

Both games require a 286 minimum,

VGA and Microsoft compatible mouse.

Graphic modes

VGA ✓ SVGA ✗

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓ Roland ✗ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✗ Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed 16MHz

Minimum memory 640K

Free RAM required 580K

Verdict

Quirky, infuriating and fun

rating
7

Dracula Unleashed

If you're familiar with Icom's Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective series, Dracula Unleashed will come as nothing of a surprise. You play Alexander Morris, who has come to London to investigate his brother's mysterious stabbing.

The mechanics of the game are simple. You begin the game with a scant list of locations which you can visit to learn more about the story. At each one you are shown a video clip that advances the story and gives you access to an object or a new location. Once a new location is discovered, it is added to the list of places you can visit.

Alexander is a meticulous diary freak and anything vaguely interesting is recorded in the diary. Between locations and clips you can re-read the diary, examine and use objects and pass the time.

Of course, the title gives away the gist of the story and before you know it there are newspaper reports of headless bodies drained of blood, dry ice and spooky graveyards. Visual as well as verbal clichés abound because there's a vampire at large in London and you're the hero who is going to stop him ...

Dracula Unleashed describes itself as an "interactive horror movie" but while it does feature some interaction, it is far from being a movie. The quality of the video is remark-

ably good, but there is some dreadful acting by Americans trained at the Dick Van Dyke Academy of Exaggerated Cockney Accents.

There's precious little gameplay underneath and when the wow factor has worn off, you're not left with much of a game for your money.

■ Dean Evans



Techspec

Requires a 386 or better, VGA and a

compatible sound card. Runs direct from the CD.

Graphic modes

VGA ✓ SVGA ✓

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓ Roland ✓ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✗ Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed 33MHz

Minimum memory 2Mb

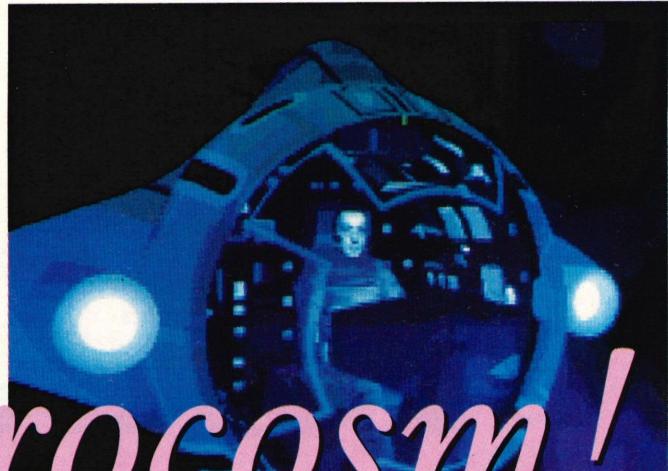
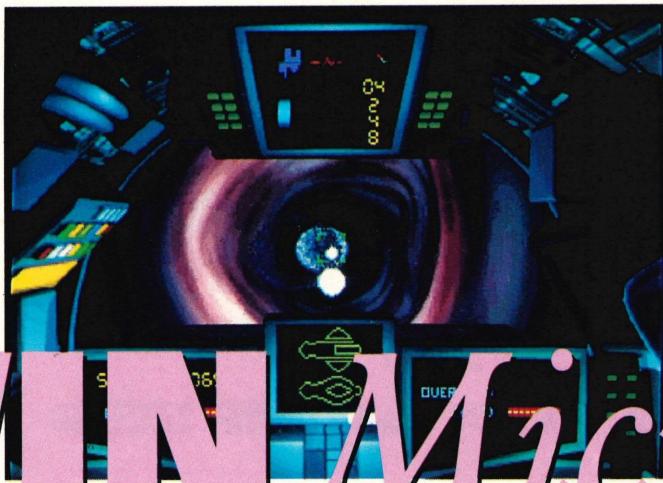
Free RAM required 600K

Verdict

Nice video but shallow gameplay

rating
6

COMPETITION



WIN *Microcosm!* Gold CD-ROM

To celebrate Psygnosis's forthcoming game, Microcosm, we're giving away a fully playable gold CD-ROM which has been signed by the development team. The only way to get hold of this unique prize is to win our exclusive competition, so get writing! Ten lucky runners up will receive the game of their choice from the following Psygnosis titles: Dracula, Lemmings (the original), Creepers, Armour-Geddon, Dungeon Master and Spear of Destiny.

Psygnosis, the company which inflicted Lemmings on an unsuspecting public, has joined the CD revolution by releasing a stunning new game in which you pilot a microscopic craft through the human body. With over 500Mb of graphics and sound data, full colour VGA graphics and an original soundtrack by Rick Wakeman, it's guaranteed to knock your socks off.

How to enter

Just answer the questions on the form supplied and stick the completed coupon on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. Send your entry to Microcompo, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Microcompo

The answers are as follows:

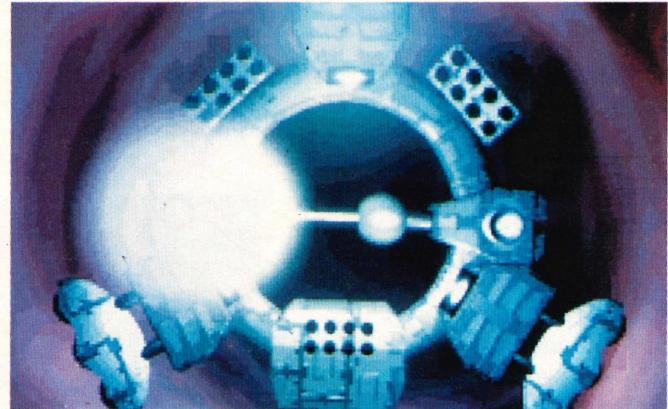
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(see above for list):

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Address.....

Tick this box if you do NOT want to receive any further information from companies associated with this competition.



Questions

1. Which one of these films is NOT about journeying through the human body in a miniaturised ship?

- a **Fantastic Voyage**
b **Incredible Journey**
c **Innerspace**

2. Where in the body would you find a cardiac sphincter?

- a **Heart**
b **Bladder**
c **Stomach**

3. Which of the following games is NOT a Psygnosis product?

- a **Obitus**
b **Troddlers**
c **Bram Stoker's Dracula**

The closing date is December 15th, 1993.

Rules

- Prize winners will be selected after the closing date.
- Entries received after the closing date won't be considered.
- Only ONE entry per person, please.
- Employees of EMAP Images or Psygnosis are not eligible to enter.
- The editor's decision in all these matters is final.

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BUDGET reviews

You don't have to spend over £40 on a game. The games below all sell for less than £15, and some of them, at least, are pretty good



Kwick Snax Codemasters

£9.99

You play Dizzy, a sort of hyperactive egg, and with your Yolkfolk band you decide to go on holiday after a long hard tour.

After an argument the evil wizard Zaks sends your friends to different lands, such as Ice-land and Cloud-land and inevitably your task is to rescue them. The game is divided into four levels and you can chose which destination to begin the game with.



CJ's Elephant Antics Codemasters

£9.99

This may be just another platform game but it's actually great fun and well worth the price. Somewhere over France, an aeroplane carrying CJ the elephant to a zoo in England hits turbulence and CJ's cage breaks open.

He escapes out of the plane with an umbrella and begins the journey back to his family in Africa.

At the end of each level CJ must defeat a boss such as the hunchback, and along his travels he will have to destroy frogs, snails, clouds and policemen.

He can jump using his umbrella which will break his fall and he also has the ability to fire peanuts from his trunk or throw bombs. Eating things such as cakes and bananas will help him keep in top condition and some foes do contain invincibility pills which will keep immune from anything for a while.

The graphics are clearly defined and the sound is of a good quality throughout. I would, however, recommend using the keyboard rather than a joystick, because you'll probably find it gives you more control. In addition to this, you can switch between fast, slow or normal speed to run the game to suit your reflexes, or lack of them.



The Magic Candle II Hit Squad

£14.99

The Magic Candle series has something of a cult following among those who like their role-playing games heavy, complex and layered at the expense of polish and presentation — and, let's face it, ease of use. There's a vast range of options, hordes of characters (31, actually) available to join your party, sub-quests, special skills for the computer characters which need careful manipulation, and puzzles and combat galore.

But it really is one for the purists: the more dilettante among us would question whether there's anything particularly exciting or interesting in the way the whole thing is put together.



World Class Rugby Audiogenic

£14.99

I'm sorry to say this but this is no great shakes as a rugby simulation. The gameplay, sound and graphics are poor to average and the control system is unreliable, to say the least.

However, this is not to say that the game doesn't have its moments. One of the better things about this game, is the fact that you can

choose from all of the world cup teams and the five home nation teams. During the game rules such as offside and penalties are given which gives the game some pretence to authenticity. And it is possible to have some fun — albeit short-lived — with it.

World Class Rugby has one other thing in its favour: it's not International Rugby Challenge.



Hook Hit Squad

£12.99

This is the game of the film in which where Peter Pan (now grown up), has to rescue his kids who have been kidnapped by Captain Hook.

One of the main hurdles you have to overcome is to get on board Hook's ship. You have to travel around town talking to pirates, shopkeepers and innkeepers to find a pirate's uniform that will get you on board the ship.

The game play is quite easy and the graphics are smooth and clear, but the whole thing gets repetitive after a while and although there is some welcome humour (such as trying to steal the old woman's clothes), I doubt Hook will maintain your interest.



Chuck Yeager's Air Combat Hit Squad

£14.99

This veteran flight simulator is a welcome budget release and worth





every penny of the asking price. It may not have the heavyweight set of controls and options of modern flight sims, but it's easy to handle, the response is excellent and it's a dream to play. This is topped off with some effective sounds from your bullets, missiles and afterburners, and the detail in the landscape and aircraft graphics. The movement on the screen is smooth and clear and it is far easier to use the joystick rather than use the mouse or keys.

It also has the added attraction of some genial advice from Chuck Yeager himself; he'll let you know if you're stalling, or if you need to fire flares at oncoming missiles. In addition, you can make each mission easy or difficult and little cheats such as unlimited ammo and invincibility will really help. Furthermore, you can create your own missions, rather than the supplied World War II, Korean War or Vietnam War scenarios.



Steel Thunder Hit Squad £12.99

Tank simulations have a reputation for being dull, but Steel Thunder is quite enjoyable once you get the hang of it.

You can be fussy and choose your crew and tank but if you can't wait, you can go straight into a mission. You have a choice of 24 missions set in three countries: Cuba, West Germany and Syria. Once on a mission you can be the gunner, driver or the commander. If you choose the gunner you do at least have the



pleasure of blowing up the other tanks and buildings yourself. Don't be too trigger-happy because ammo runs out quite quickly and you have to have a steady hand and good reflexes.

Overall, this is a well-designed game but its graphic and audio presentation don't do it any favours: more mid-80s standard than early 90s. But Steel Thunder shouldn't be dismissed out of hand.



Blue Angels Hit Squad £12.99

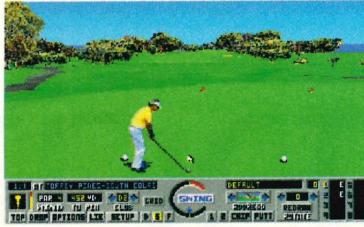
Another flight simulator, but this one is with a difference. You are part of an air display team and apart from practising stunts with other aircrafts at the end of it you should be able to put on a show. Stunt Island it isn't, but it's fun all the same.

Some of the moves, however, are quite difficult so it is wise to train in the flight simulator or practise at a slow speed before increasing the pace. The game teaches you how to do the moves with the arrow keys, explained on the left hand side of the screen when you



are in flight sim mode. The most enjoyable part of the game is probably the free flight section, where you get to fling the plane around the sky exactly as you want.

The graphics and sound are not up to the standard of Chuck Yeager's Air Combat, but the game is a lot more difficult to master especially when you're flying in a formation team. If you're fed up with going on dangerous missions, loves performing and does not mind being at a flight simulation game for hours, this game could well be for you.



Links: The Challenge of Golf Kixx XL £16.99

Links is one of the all-time classics. Created by Access, which cut its teeth with the Atari ST and Amiga Leaderboard series, it has now been superseded by Links Pro in the full-price stakes, but in its day Links set new standards in graphic realism on the PC.

It still offers outstanding terrain detail, accurate course modelling and first rate animation of the golfer, and the sheer variety and detail of the trees, buildings, and bunkers will put most full-priced golf games to shame. Sound effects such as birds chirping, the ball hitting the trees, a nice meaty 'thwack' as you driver makes contact with the ball and constant commentary bring the game even further to life.

But what really makes Links a cut above the rest are the options open to the player. You can make infinitesimal adjustments to your stance and swing, as well as decide which club to play and the type of shot to use. Fortunately this doesn't make it a difficult game to play, though, and the control system is essentially very simple. Another good thing about the game is you do not have to be master to play it, you have three levels of gameplay: pro, amateur and beginner.

Highly recommended for anyone looking for an introduction to PC golf, or those with 286 machines which won't run Links Pro.



Night Shift Kixx XL £12.99

One of the forgotten programs from the LucasArts catalogue, Night Shift is something of a curiosity: nothing to do with SCUMM, or Monkey Island, but a platform cum

puzzle game which tests the reflexes and teases the brain.

You are a new employee in a toy factory and you have to keep the machine called the beast in working order. You have to meet your quota each night or you will be fired. It takes a while to get the hang of the controls, and even when you do, you'll find Night Shift is hardly easy.



The graphics are intricate and clearly detailed, and if the entertainment isn't particularly long-lasting, it's refreshing different to many full-price games on the market today. Indeed, it would almost be worth buying for its novelty value alone.



REVIEWED THIS MONTH

CJ's Elephant Antics

★★★

Kwick Snax

★★★

Magic Candle II

★★

World Class Rugby

★★

Hook

★★

Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

★★★★★

Steel Thunder

★★

Blue Angels

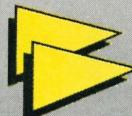
★★★

Links: Challenge of Golf

★★★★

Night Shift

★★★



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PC review

recommended

PC Review has long run its best buys recommendations on these pages, but from this issue, we're formalising the process, with our new PC Review Recommended awards. Games billed as PC Review Recommended will be few and far between, but they will be, in our opinion, outstanding. A PC Review Recommended award is a guarantee of excellence



Syndicate
Bullfrog/Electronic Arts,
£44.99

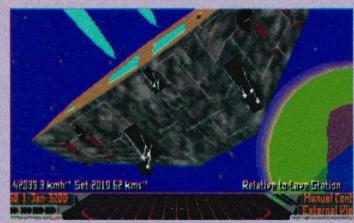
A successful combination of action and strategy in which you head a huge corporation bent on world domination. Set in the near future, it's extremely atmospheric, absorbing and fun to boot.



Tornado
Digital Integration, £44.99
Tornado shows just what can and should be done with the flight sim. Ignoring flashy graphics for variety and playability, Tornado ranks up there with Falcon 3.0 as one of the best tech-heavy sims on the market today.



TFX
DID/Ocean, £39.99
A very versatile playable flight sim with separate gaming modes to cater for the more technically minded as well as those who simply want to shoot the enemy out of the sky. Graphically, it's also a cut above the rest.



Frontier: Elite II
Gametek, £39.99
Following in the footsteps of the much lauded Elite, Frontier has to be the biggest space sim of the decade. An exciting mixture of combat and trading, Frontier has enough to keep anyone happy for months. A must have.

PC Review Recommended

Your chance to win a copy of

Frontier: Elite II —

recommended this month

Only one game, Frontier: Elite II, has been awarded a Recommended accolade this month. Answer the following question correctly, and send your entry to PC Review Recommended, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, to reach us by December 7, 1993, and your answer will be placed in the prize draw for a copy of Elite II.

Frontier: Elite II

Q: What are the three different start positions in Frontier: Elite II?

- A: 1)
2)
3)

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WIN!

PC Review Recommended games

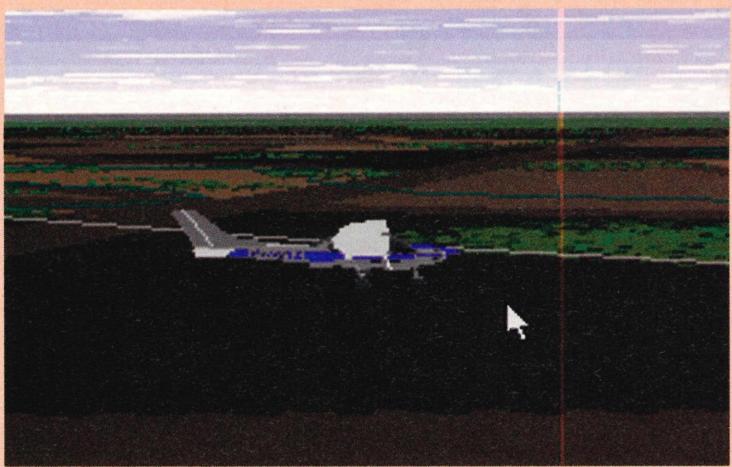
Not only do you have the advantage of knowing that these are currently the best games in their class, but we give you the chance to win a copy of a PC Review Recommended title. We have five copies of each newly Recommended game to give away to the winners of this competition.

How to enter

If you'd like the chance to win a copy of TFX, simply answer the question on the form, left, and send your entry on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to PC Review Recommended, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

The closing date is December 7, 1993, and any entries received after that will not go into the prize draw. All normal competition rules apply, particularly the one about not sending in multiple entries. One form per person, please!

Charts: the PC Top 10



1. Flight Simulator 5	<i>Microsoft</i>
2. Privateer	<i>Origin/Electronic Arts</i>
3. Kasparov's Gambit	<i>Electronic Arts</i>
4. Return to Zork	<i>Activision</i>
5. Privateer Speech Pack	<i>Origin/Electronic Arts</i>
6. Day of the Tentacle	<i>LucasArts/US Gold</i>
7. Streetfighter 2	<i>Capcom/US Gold</i>
8. Dark Sun	<i>SSI/US Gold</i>
9. X-Wing	<i>LucasArts/US Gold</i>
10. Simon the Sorcerer	<i>Adventure Soft</i>

Charts courtesy of Virgin Retail.

Your prayers answered?

The MS-DOS manual makes no pretence to be a literary work. It's dry, dense and trying to look up a specific command or procedure can be a strangely frustrating process. Yet, if you've ever browsed through a bookshop looking for a simple starter guide to DOS, you'll probably have found that books on the computing shelves are even more esoteric.

There are good books for DOS beginners — DOS for Dummies has been around for a while but you shouldn't be too put off by the title — but they are few and far between. So it's with some pleasure and a sense of discovery that PC Review recommends a little gem we've discovered.

The Way Computers & MS-DOS Work, by Simon Collin, is published by Microsoft Press, and explains all aspects of setting up your PC and DOS more clearly than just about any other book we've come across. This

not only applies to the text, but also the diagrams and photographs: step by step photos showing how everything fits together, and photos of various PC parts and peripherals as well.

It also covers DOS 6: installing the thing and the Doublespace, defragmentation and anti-virus utilities, and introduces the basic DOS commands, though this really is a beginners' book. If you can switch directories and copy files with confidence you may not learn anything new.

Anyway, it's not often we come across a book which seems so obviously suitable to the PC novice, so we thought we'd let you know about it. Even if it's too basic for you, someone you know might appreciate such a book in their Christmas stocking.

• The Way Computers & MS-DOS Work, Simon Collin, published by Microsoft Press (£14.95, ISBN 1-55615-568-9).

REVIEWED THIS MONTH

Frontier: Elite 2	9
Kasparov's Gambit	8
Gold Juno Sword	8
Dark Sun: Shattered Lands	7
Global Domination	7
Strike Commander: Tactical Operations	7
Goal!	7
Return to Zork	6
Kingmaker	6
The Blue and the Gray	6
Privateer	5
Patriot	5
SimFarm	5
Eight Ball Deluxe	5
CD-ROM GAMES	
Gobliins/Gobliins 2	7
Dracula Unleashed	6

The PC Review elite

In 26 issues and 357 reviews, only 14 games have been awarded a mark of 9 out of 10 (and no game has yet scored 10 — one day, one day ...). The elite that have made it into the nines club are:

Alone in the Dark
AV8-B Harrier Assault



Chessmaster 3000
Day of the Tentacle
Falcon 3.0
Frontier: Elite II
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker
LeChuck's Revenge: Monkey Island 2
Sensible Soccer
Syndicate
TFX
Tornado
Ultima Underworld



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Straight Paper Path	-	NO	(ONLY FACE UP)	YES	YES
PCL 5 Printer Command Language	-	YES	-	YES	YES
HP/GL-2 Vector Graphics included	YES	YES	-	YES	YES
Resolution Improvement/Enhancement	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard RAM	1Mb	1Mb	512K	1Mb	2Mb
Full A4/300 dpi graphics with standard RAM	-	-	-	-	YES
Warm Up Time	33 secs	25 secs	<60 secs	60 secs	45 secs
First Page of Text Output	-	15 secs	31 secs	18 secs	<15 secs
Document Description Language included	-	-	-	-	YES
Flash ROM	-	-	-	-	YES
Flash ROM Upgradeable Firmware	-	-	-	-	YES
PCMCIA Card Slot	-	-	-	-	YES
Scalable Resident Fonts - in HP LJ III Emulation	0	8	0	8	8
Bit-Mapped Fonts	10	14	2	14	14
AGFA Intelligent Scalable Font Technology	-	YES	-	YES	YES
HP LaserJet III Emulation Included	-	YES	-	YES	YES
EPSON FX Emulation Included	-	YES	YES	YES	YES
IBM ProPrinter Emulation Included	-	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard Tray Capacity	200	150	70	200	100
Protective cover on standard tray	YES	-	YES	YES	YES
Cost per copy**	1.9p	2.0p	2.1p	2.2p	1.65p
Min-Max Paper Weight in gsm	60-163	60-157	60-105	60-135	60-169
Able to print on OHP Film	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Able to print on 169gsm card (Manual Feed)	-	-	-	-	YES
Standby - Noise Level	38dB(A)	35dB(A)	<43dB(A)	<43dB(A)	<39dB
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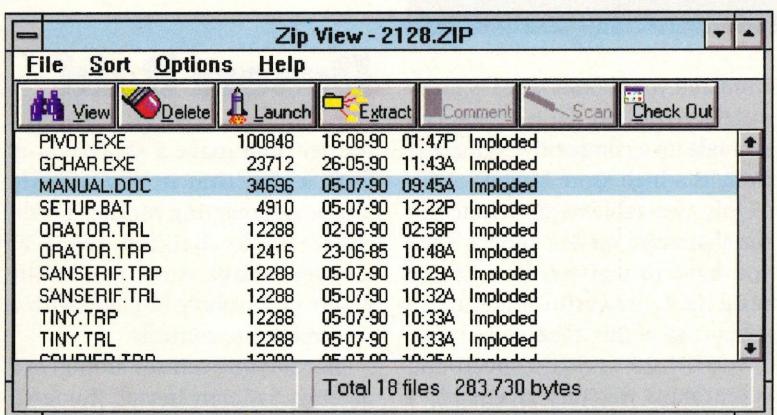
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Shareware reviews

Sam Mackenzie is Dragging and Zipping, ray tracing, personally organising, playing pinball, shooting 'em up, and dithering with graphics this month



Drag and Zip

Hard disks are always filling up. The obvious solution is to use some sort of disk compression, but if you are worried about compressing your entire disk, why not just compress parts of it? Drag and Zip is a Windows utility that makes it very easy to use either Pkzip or LHA under Windows. It's also featured on this month's cover disk (3.5" edition), so you can try it out for yourself, and see just how easy it is to use effectively.

Once you have installed Drag and Zip on to your hard disk, its icon appears within the File Manager whenever you start it running. You

can drag files from the usual File Manager windows on to the icon and they will be automatically compressed using either of the two standard compression packages. You can drag a single file, groups of files or an entire directory and they will all be compressed into an archive.

You have some choices over how the compression is performed. You can set the name of the archive file. If this already exists then the files are added to it. You can also select the compression mode.

After this, a DOS window appears and you see the files being compressed as if you had given the command from the DOS prompt. Notice that you already have to have

either Pkzip or LHA (not LHarc) for this to work.

Thus it becomes easy to archive files, but what about getting them back? For this, you use Zip View. This makes working with archived files about as straightforward as it can be. Once you select the archive file, its contents are shown to you in the form of a directory listing. Any file that you want to look at you can ask to view and it will be temporarily decompressed so you can read it. If it is a program, then you can run it — again using a temporary decompression. If you are convinced that you want the whole of the archive returned to its decompressed state then simply select the extract option.

A virus scanner can also be activated to check the archive — but again you must already have the virus scanner installed.

ZipView, and Drag and Zip itself are very nicely written implemented programs and a pleasure to use. Canyon Software, the company that wrote them, is clearly worth watching for any future programs that it produces.

The program itself works by adding a file launcher to the File Manager. What this does is to start other programs when ever you start the File Manager. Of course this is added so that the main Drag and Zip program is started along with the File Manager but you can use this facility to add programs of your choice to the File Manager.

Drag and Zip should help you keep archives of files that you only want to use occasionally and it makes unpacking zipped shareware no trouble at all!

Space Chase

Just when you thought it was safe to switch on your PC, along comes another shareware platform game that bears a suspicious resemblance to Apogee's Duke Nukem. Even Apogee itself has taken a long hard look at the original Duke to produce its latest platformer, Bio Menace.

Space Chase puts you in the role of Jason Storm, another gun toting hero who is prepared to jump up and down platforms for hours on end in order to save the world. Your mission is to track down the leaders of Evil Guys Inc and stop them from taking control of the planetary government.

Once you've found these naughty chappies you have to capture them, destroy their forces and generally kick an almighty amount of butt in standard universe-saving fashion.

The reminder screen that comes up when you exit the game hails Space Chase as classic state of the art arcade action. It has to be questionable whether or not a game that uses 16-colour EGA graphics in 1993 can be described as state of the art.

Still, it's gameplay that matters most with this type of game and in that respect at least, author Safari

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Tel:	(0442) 891331
Product code:	DRAGZIP
Price:	£3
Registration price:	£14 plus VAT
Registration package:	Reminders for registering removed
Minimum specification:	All video modes and input devices on any Windows 3.1 machine
Disk Space:	1Mb

Product
Drag and Zip

* 1993 *



Software has certainly delivered the goods.

The gameplay consists of exploring vast levels, finding keys to open doors, getting lost a lot and battling an endless stream of baddies. The idea is to find the exit at the end of every level so you can progress to the next.

There are lots of weird and wonderful machines and dalek-type sentries to dispose of, transporters to whisk you from one end of a level to another and countless switches and platforms to activate. Your journey takes you through a variety of locations, from the city to suburbia and even down the sewers. For me, Cloudland is easily the most fun of the lot. There's just something about jumping about on clouds having a pop at everyone that tickles me.

The shareware version forms part one of a three episode adventure giving you ten massive levels to play around with and there's more than enough to do in this lot to keep anyone happy for a few weeks.

Space Chase doesn't quite have the addictive quality of classics such as Duke Nukem, but if platform games are your thing, it's well worth having a go at this one. You shouldn't be disappointed.

Epic Pinball

If the mention of a pinball simulation immediately turns you off — hold on a moment! This isn't the usual low resolution, badly-implemented pinball game from the days when CGA was a high resolution mode! Epic Pinball is a full and very realistic implementation of a pinball machine. The graphics are great

Supplier:	Transend
Tel:	(0274) 622228
Product code:	1465D
Price:	£2.50
Registration price:	£21.70
Registration package:	Two more episodes, cheat codes
Minimum specification:	EGA, 286 min
Disk space:	2.2 Mb
Product	Space Chase
<i>shareware tech spec '1993'</i>	



and the animation is even better. You pull the spring loaded pin back using the space bar. The longer you hold the space bar the further it is pulled back. When you release the space bar the ball is fired into the table and starts bouncing around. Sounds boring, but the quality of the animation is so good it is very satisfying. The board display scrolls to keep the ball in view as it bounces around so the table can be much larger than the screen size.

If you have a sound card, the stereo sound effects are excellent and help create the impression that the ball really is bouncing off bumpers and pins. You can control the flippers using the arrow keys and again the stereo sound effect comes from the correct side. The background music track is appropriate to the table being played and creates an exciting mood — conjuring up the atmosphere of a casino, the Wild West and so on.

Pressing the space bar again activates the tilt and so after you get bored looking and listening you can start practising long forgotten skills.

There are additional difficulties included with each table — just like the ones you find on a real pinball machine — and these present an additional challenge after the first novelty has worn off and enable you to clock up huge bonus scores. For example, if you hit all four 'dominoes' in one go you score points. The challenge on one table is to get the ball to go down the right-hand lane. This spells out the word GHOST, one letter at a time. Each letter gives you points: complete the

word and your bonus score is unsatisfactory. You can opt for two-player mode for a competitive game and there is a high score league.

Only two tables are included in the shareware version and for more you have to register. You need a reasonably powerful machine to support all of this animation. I used a 386DX-25 and the speed and smoothness was very acceptable. I wouldn't like to attempt it on anything smaller than at 386SX-16 — but that's the good thing about shareware, you can try it!

I didn't expect to like Epic Pinball after all the low quality pinball games I have tried — but I was wrong. It's worth looking at just for the quality of the animation and the way the stereo sound effects work. If you enjoy playing pinball machines, this is the computer simulation to try — it has the same look and feel, except you don't need to put any money in the slot.

Supplier:	Transend
Tel:	(0274) 622228
Product code:	15500
Price:	£2.50
Registration price:	£21.99
Registration package:	More tables
Minimum specification:	VGA, Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Gravis sound card, Keyboard, at least 386SX-16 with 544K free RAM
Disk Space:	3Mb
Product	Epic Pinball
<i>shareware tech spec '1993'</i>	

Supplier:	Transend
Tel:	(0274) 622228
Product code:	15510
Price:	£2.50
Registration price:	£19.95
Registration package:	Six more levels plus Lost in Space
Minimum specification:	VGA, joystick, Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, 286, 580K free RAM
Disk space:	2Mb
Product	Desert Raid
<i>shareware tech spec '1993'</i>	

Desert Raid

Rather than make a shoot-em-up with a plot that involves nasty aliens endangering Mother Earth, those wacky Belgian types at Copysoft have stuck you in the desert in a wobbly bi-plane with a squirrel at the controls.

The storyline centres around evil dictator Sadman Insane (honest!) who has been building up weapons of mass destruction. Sadman also claims to have found an ancient map that shows quite clearly that the entire circumference of the world was once his country.

Enter Skunny Hardnut, all-round superhero and a squirrel with an attitude. Armed with a small bi-plane, a few bombs and a truck load of luck, Skunny must thwart this evil plan and rid the world of nasty tyrant Sadders.

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power-ups that float down the screen in parachutes and dodging missiles every step of the way. With non-stop action, over the top explosions and a great sense of humour — startled Arabs come floating down the screen after you've blown up their helicopters — Desert Raid has all the right stuff to keep you interested from start to finish.

The 256 colour VGA graphics are excellent and show what can be done by shareware designers if they put their minds to it, and the four fun-filled levels included in the shareware version should be more than enough to give you a taste of what to expect from the full registered version of the game.

Desert Raid is one of several adventures featuring Skunny, all of which should be available by the time you read this review and if the previews I've seen are anything to go by, you can expect the same high standard of gameplay and visual quality from all the others.

Lost In Space has Skunny driving about the surface of the moon in a platform game very similar to the Atari classic Moonbuggy, and you can get that title free by registering Desert Raid. Now that's what I call a bargain!

Graphics Workshop

The need to convert between different graphics file formats isn't as great a problem as it used to be because most of the graphics programs now read and write a reasonable range of formats. It still can be troublesome, though!

Graphics Workshop is a bit-mapped format converter and viewer. It is very difficult to write a good file format converter and as a result the best known such programs,

Supplier:	Ensign Shareware
Tel:	(081) 778 2871
Product code:	GWORKSH
Price:	£2.50
Registration price:	\$40
Registration package:	No beg. screen
Minimum specification:	HGA, CGA, EGA, VGA, any with 384K RAM extended memory desirable
Disk space:	880K

such as Hijaak, cost a lot of money. By comparison, Graphics Workshop is cheap to use and register, and it works.

It runs under MS-DOS, but can also happily function under Windows. It is fast and easy to use. The formats that it can convert between are MAC (MacPaint), IMG (GEM/Ventura), PCX (Paintbrush), GIF, BMP, IFF/LBM, TGA, MSP, WPG, PIC (PC Paint, not Lotus), TIFF and CUT (Halo).

In addition, there is some support for bitmapped EPS files. You can also create images of text files in plain ASCII and self-displaying exe files. These self-displaying files enable you to package a graphic up and send it to another user so that they can have a look at it just by typing its name.

To convert a file from one format to another, you simply select it together with the new format. You can also batch convert files. The range of file formats supported includes many variations on the standard format, for example, 24-bit versions of PCX and tiff formats. You also have the facility to scale and crop the image while it is being converted.

If you select a file and press return then you can also have a look at it. In most cases, conversion between one format and another will be all you really require but there are a range of special effects that you can

apply. You can reduce the number of colours used, convert to grey scale, sharpen, soften, posterise and convert to 24-bit colour, should you so wish!

There is also a range of dithering methods that you can use to convert a colour or grey scale image to black and white. Dithered images are most useful when you need to print an image. The majority of applications will attempt to dither an image before they print it out, but Graphics Workshop is likely to do a better job.

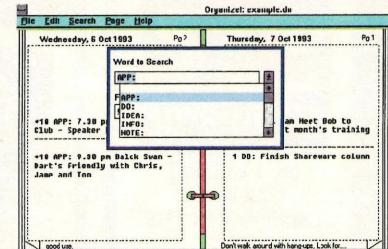
If you have a LaserJet or PostScript printer then you can print images direct to it. A range of other printers are also supported including many dot matrix printers. The support for video different video displays is also very good. Most of the standard SVGA cards seem to be supported, along with some rarities such as the Amstrad 1640's 16 colour EGA mode.

A really long, comprehensive and enthusiastic manual is included on the disk and you do need to read it to get the most out of the program.

You don't really get much extra in the registered version, except for an up-to-date copy and the after-sales support, but the final part of the manual does state that if you don't register the program, "a leather-winged demon of the night will tear itself, shrieking blood and fury, from the endless caverns of the nether world, hurl itself into the darkness with a thirst for blood on its slavering fangs and search the very threads of time for the throbbing of your heartbeat." I just thought you might like to know that.

Although I have a copy of Hijaak, its interface is so awful and it is so bug-ridden that I intend to give Graphics Workshop a chance to prove itself better — what more can I say as a recommendation?

Product Graphics Workshop



Organize!

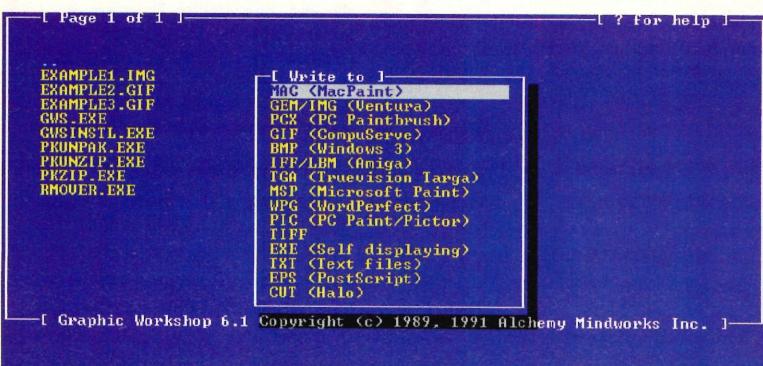
When I loaded Organize! I had some preconceived ideas about how personal organiser software should look and behave and I have to admit that I was disappointed. This is a primitive implementation and you have to do all the organising for yourself. The advantage it has over a word processor is its diary-page presentation.

Organize! encourages you to develop your own methods of making and finding notes. It suggests you use a simple keyword system — APP for appointment, DO for a To-Do task, Idea for things you want to think about — and then a numbering system for periods or priorities. For example, if you preface October's appointments with 10 then when you search for 10 APP you will see a list of that month's appointments. Mark urgent to do tasks 1 DO, less pressing ones 2 DO and so on. It also has a method for indicating that an appointment or task has been completed — preface its entry with *.

The program is password protected but in the shareware version there is only one password, share, and it's not a secret — the log-on screen tells you what it is. The ability to change or omit the password is one of the facilities that you get when you register.

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Product code:	Organize!
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Registration Price:	\$35
Registration package:	Customisable password
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Disk space:	250K

Product Organize!



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AV8B Harrier Assault

With **SVGA Harrier Assault** due out any time now,
PC Review welcomes you to the first Dudley
Wheeler AV8B campaign lecture

When I first played the Domark AV8B Harrier campaign, I lost aircraft at an alarming rate and was uncertain about what to do about the fleet, its movements and troop landings. This guide will aim to show you how to win the campaign, how to get to grips with coordinating Harrier attacks and troop landings and how to fly the Harrier for maximum effectiveness. You will also learn many facts about the AV8B Harrier simulation that are not mentioned in the manual.

Taking control of the campaign

To win the campaign, you must take control of all Harrier missions and troop landings. This means that you must delete all Harrier missions using the Battle Plan Control and fly them yourself via the Harrier icon. Before troops land, you must have operated a scorched earth policy to take out as many fixed targets as possible with your Harriers and helicopters.

At each Fleet Way Point (FWP) always give yourself several hours flying time by changing the departure time. This prevents the fleet sailing off and launching

the next missions before you have completed the current blitz on targets. Once you have finished or wish to carry on sailing, revise the departure time again.

On arrival at a new FWP, the battle plan immediately initiates the missions entered into the plan. To win it is important to realise that the first operation, without exception, is to send out helicopters to drop troops at locations with fixed targets. These troops will laser designate (LD) the fixed targets and make it much easier to hit them with the more accurate weapons like AGM-65 and laser guided bombs. Sometimes it can take a little while before the special forces become operational.

The messages on dropped forces are not always reliable and the only way of checking whether the Special forces are really operational is to go into the Intelligence window and check on the intelligence report for your chosen location. The wording "Special forces active in area" is a guarantee that targets will be laser designated. Once dropped these special forces will never be eliminated by the enemy.

The drop troop missions can be followed up by helicopter attack missions, either from the same FWP or

the next one. Introducing new FWP's can set up repeated attacks which are very effective and will take out fixed targets without any involvement by Harriers.

Use this technique for initiating attacks on heavily defended areas and/or targets a long way from the fleet, which are difficult to reach unscathed in a Harrier.

Once the helicopters have got your attack underway, the really serious business can be undertaken by Harriers, but remember to take care in deciding the target order. For example, the fuel dump at Baguia is in a valley which is guarded at its northern exit by a village. Obviously it's best to take out the enemy at this village before making attacks on Baguia.

Battle plan procedure

The procedure to be followed in putting together your battle plan should be to start from your last saved position.

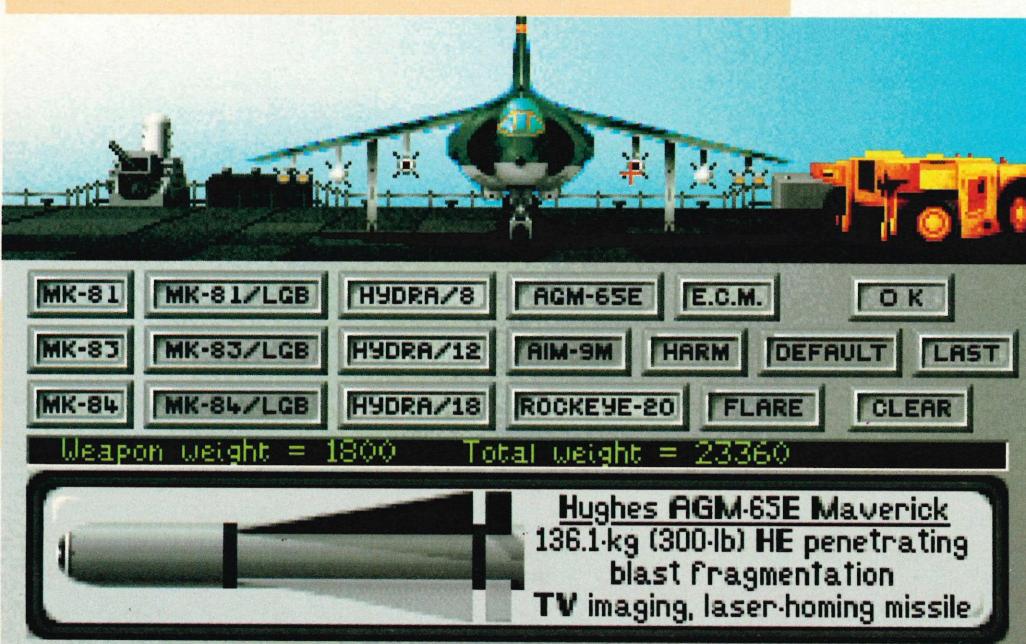
First look at any messages, click on the TAWADS console to get the island map and stop time. Survey the battleground for changes and open the intelligence icon to check targets (to see how many have been destroyed and how many remain).

Check whether special forces are in operation and using the battle plan icon delete any pre-planned Harrier missions and inappropriate troop landings. Insert helicopter missions and troop landings. Change the fleet departure time to allow plenty of time for your Harrier missions.

Exit to the TAWADS control room and save new missions. From the Harrier icon plan your next mission. Don't do more than one at a time or else Harriers will fly off on auto control and may not come back. Exit to the pilot briefing room, accept the mission, select armament and take off. Attack fixed targets and finally **SAVE** your position.

Saving

Saving your progress must become a habit. It is essential to start each mission with as many Harriers in reserve as possible. If you lose a Harrier, scrap the mission and return to the last save to restore it. After every successful attack you must immediately return to the Tarawa and save your success.





The only time you can accept a loss of a Harrier is when you have travelled a long way across the island, avoided the F16's and SAM's and managed to hit a difficult ground target, only to be zapped before you had any chance of returning to the Tarawa. You must preserve your Harriers as far as possible and not accept any unprofitable losses.

If you are concerned that the 10 slots are not going to be enough for your saves, help is at hand. Simply make a directory on a new formatted disk and call it DC1.

Now copy your existing hard disk saves (in the sub-directory DC) to the floppy disk. This will enable you to keep all your saved positions, but remember the save files take up around 500K so you won't get many saves per disk.

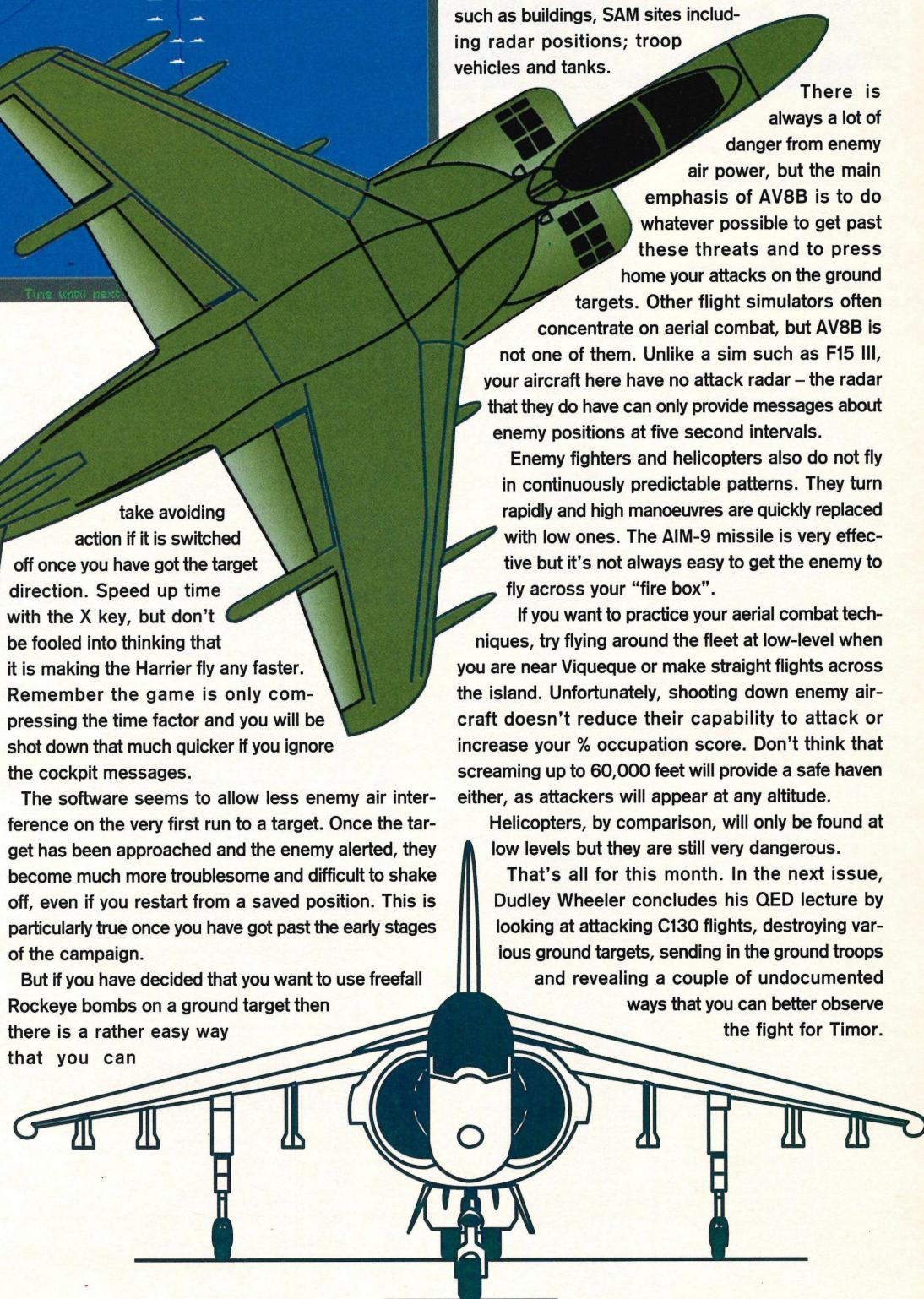
Arming and taking off

The only air-to-ground weapons that you will need to win the campaign are the AGM-65, HARM, AIM-9, HYRDA, the ECM pod and your guns. Fortunately, these weapons never run out.

The simplest way to take off is to release the brakes, hit full power and switch to auto just as the Harrier leaves the flight deck. It has the advantage of automatically raising your undercarriage, returning the nozzle angle to zero (if previously lowered) and setting you immediately on course for the target.

It is definitely worthwhile selecting your AIM-9M missiles on take off as enemy aircraft are liable to fly across your bows.

Flying to targets can be hazardous but a low level approach (500-600 feet) seems to do quite well. The auto pilot can be left on but you are better prepared to



practice your aiming. To get some idea of how the bombs release and fall, make a low-level approach in your Harrier and as you get closer to the target, hit the "O" key and drop your bombs. In this way, you can watch how the bombs fall and hit the ground as the Harrier flies away. This camera view also provides the only way that you can see flares ejected from your aircraft.

Attacking air targets

In Harrier the principal targets which you will be attacking are: enemy aircraft and helicopters; fixed targets such as buildings, SAM sites including radar positions; troop vehicles and tanks.

There is always a lot of danger from enemy air power, but the main emphasis of AV8B is to do whatever possible to get past these threats and to press home your attacks on the ground targets. Other flight simulators often concentrate on aerial combat, but AV8B is not one of them. Unlike a sim such as F15 III, your aircraft here have no attack radar – the radar that they do have can only provide messages about enemy positions at five second intervals.

Enemy fighters and helicopters also do not fly in continuously predictable patterns. They turn rapidly and high manoeuvres are quickly replaced with low ones. The AIM-9 missile is very effective but it's not always easy to get the enemy to fly across your "fire box".

If you want to practice your aerial combat techniques, try flying around the fleet at low-level when you are near Viqueque or make straight flights across the island. Unfortunately, shooting down enemy aircraft doesn't reduce their capability to attack or increase your % occupation score. Don't think that screaming up to 60,000 feet will provide a safe haven either, as attackers will appear at any altitude.

Helicopters, by comparison, will only be found at low levels but they are still very dangerous.

That's all for this month. In the next issue, Dudley Wheeler concludes his QED lecture by looking at attacking C130 flights, destroying various ground targets, sending in the ground troops and revealing a couple of undocumented ways that you can better observe the fight for Timor.

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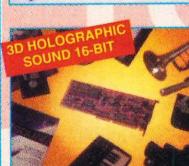
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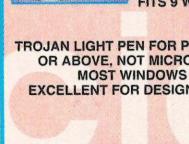


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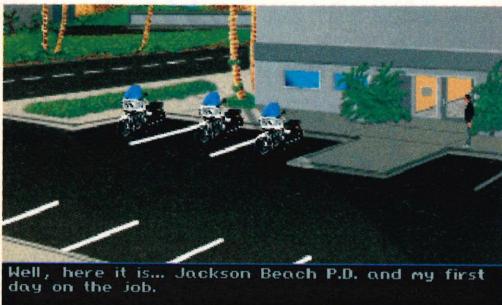


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Blue Force



Evening all - Robin Matthews patrols the first half of Tsunami's Blue Force



The police station is a cop's second home.

The latest graphic adventure from Jim Walls (of Sierra's Police Quest fame) is another cops and robbers scrap with the emphasis on following general and specific official police procedures. Now available on both disk and CD-ROM, here is a rookie cop's handy guide to the very first shift.

The intro sets the scene with a flashback to a drug deal and the murder of Irish American John Patrick Ryan and his wife – your adopted parents. Blue Force then gets under way, with you playing the role as rookie motorcycle cop Jake Ryan on his first day on patrol. Fresh from the Police Academy (is that where they make those films?), you walk into your new station and go in true Hill Street Blues fashion for your debut briefing. You are given a roving brief, but note the burly at the military armoury – and make sure you don't forget to pick up that musical score.



Quiet and picturesque. No danger here – surely?

Next, leave the building through the south-west exit and climb on the right hand side motorbike. Before you ride off, however, open up the glove compartment and take out two items – a ticket book (for handing out citations like parking tickets), and your Miranda Card. This card takes its name from a famous case in American jurisprudence which introduced a transatlantic version of the 'caution', ie, anything you say may be taken down ... and used against you in evidence or in a cops and robbers film or crime re-enactment series on the TV.

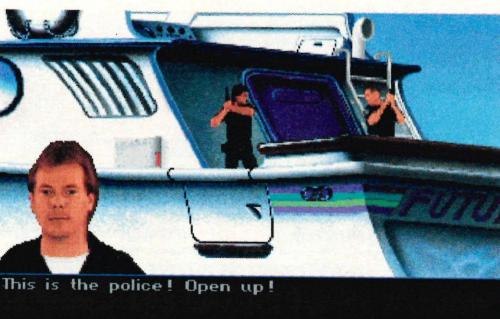
Cruise around Jackson Beach, eventually cracking your first big case and issuing one of those citations. You'll now get a radio crime report and be pointed to the marina. Full throttle and, upon arrival, call in with a 10-97, then check with the woman and child. Evil's afoot! especially when you hear a shot. Now a fundamental principle of US law enforcement is to 'be careful out there', so call in again and request back-up via code 10-35. Return to the witnesses and keep talking until your partner arrives.



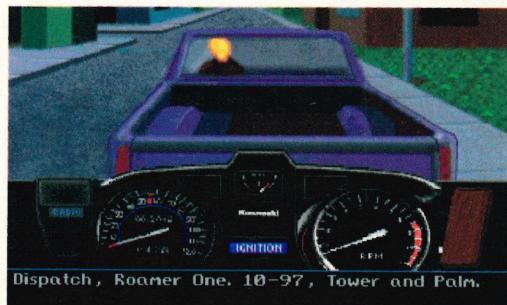
Shots ring out: time for spontaneous heroism.

Tell Doug the story so far and then walk down the pier. Board the yacht but before knocking doors load your pistol and have it drawn and ready (the trick here is to transfer the ammo clip into the pistol, grab the pistol and 'use' it on yourself). Doug's a real copycat so by now you should both be toolled up.

Knock-knock (twice) and when it comes down to a showdown the word is mightier than the sword. Don't give up your piece and consider getting a new partner – what a prat! Handcuff the villain after he's seen the error of his ways, then search him, the room (in particular the bed) and 'Mirandise' him using the card. You have started your life in law enforcement more quickly than you could say "Book him, Dougie" and finally give solace to the former hostage. Back to your trusty steed and then radio in again. Use codes 10-27, 10-15 and 10-98.



Using correct police procedure, storm the boat.



Traffic duty. The life of a cop isn't glamorous.

Mr Green should be processed now, so head for the city clink straightaway and go through the door to the left (try your chat-up line if you want, but you won't get far, I promise).

Take a booking slip from the holder on the wall, and use Green's licence to find the details you need to complete the slip. Hand in the form to the custody officer and then head back to HQ.

At the station, file the booking form in Sergeant Sutter's mail tray and hand in all the case evidence to Barry. Make sure that you check out the bulletin board every time you are in this area.

Back out on the streets until you get another call: this time it's for a downtown area that's pretty tough. Radio for back-up using code 10-97 and 10-35. Assistance is immediate, enabling you to cuff homely #1 safely, search and then 'Mirandise' him. Talk to homely #2, get Doug to do his bit and put them in the squad car. Now search the truck and recover three pieces of evidence, one in front, two behind.

After the search, radio in with 10-98, 10-27 and 10-15. Go directly to jail and repeat the booking procedure with the new customer. Head back to the station, file the paperwork and hand in the goodies to the property officer. A policeman's work is never done!

POLICE RADIO CODES IN BLUE FORCE

- 10-1 Radio reception poor
- 10-2 Radio reception good
- 10-4 Received message
- 10-13 Weather check
- 10-15 Prisoner in custody
- 10-27 Subject check
- 10-35 Back-up requested
- 10-97 Arrived at scene
- 10-98 Cleared scene:available for call
- 10-99 Emergency: officer needs assistance
- 11:00 Closing time

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HELP WANTED

Curse of Enchantia

In Curse of Enchantia I am stuck in all the caves. I have with me a paper clip, coin, pendant, monitor and a branch. Please help!

Christopher Endicott
Crawley

Eye of the Beholder II

I can't get off the first level. I've uncovered the dungeon area and there's two locked doors. Upstairs there is also two locked doors, one with a mouth in it. How do I get them open?

Christian Taylor
Brighton

Eternam

An issue or two ago, Jim Meadows was having a few problems in Eternam, the weird but very wonderful game from Infogrames. Thankfully, Sam 'Captain Blood' Jeffreys comes promptly to his rescue. If there's anyone else who can't get on to the ferry, listen up.

To get on the ferry you must obtain two passes, one from each of the brothers who rule the island. Go to the first brother's house (the one with the guy playing the piano), talk to him and he'll ask you to spy on his wife. Go into her room with the camera and hide behind the screen. When she starts her evil business use the camera to film it. Take the camera to the baron and he'll give you the pass.

Next, you'll need a gold piece so either beat the wrestler in the square (use the little knife) or visit the enchanting young artist at her snow-covered house. Offer to be her agent and she'll give you 10 gold pieces. Take the cash and go to the second brother's house. Trample on the grass and you'll be escorted to the courthouse. In jail talk to the kids outside the window and they'll show you how to escape. Go back to the second brother's house and go in. Ask him for a pass and he'll just give it to you.

Mr Jeffrey's unusual moniker comes from an old Infogrames game of the same name. He'll be forever grateful if anyone has or knows the whereabouts of a PC version.

Indy and the Fate of Atlantis

For those of you still stumbling through LucasArts' movie adventure (I know there's a fair few of you), here is a list of all the objects you're going to need to find (and how to use them) in the highly frustrating maze section.

A bronze spoked wheel which is in the room with robot parts in it.

A bronze gear wheel in a similar room.

A statue head (a strange mix of a bull and a fish).

A coiled eel like the one found in Iceland.

A rib-cage found at one of the cave-ins in the outer corridor.

A cup. In the statue room use the ladder across the hole to get it.

In the lava room, use the cup with the pedestal and the statue head with the plaque.

In the machine room use the bronze spoked wheel with the peg and then use the cup of lava with the funnel at the top. Pick up the beads and the wheel.

At the high vent looking in on the dungeon, use a bead with the sentry statue to kill the guard.

In the crab room, use the bratwurst with the rib-cage and then use both with the pool to catch a crab.

In the sentry room, use a bead with the eel and then use a bead with the fish statue.

Adventure corner

If you have any suggestions for solutions or features that you would like to see in PC Review's tips section, drop us a line at the usual PC Review address. I'm sorry to say that with the increase in magazine size, time has become much more limited and QED is, for the time being, unable to continue offering the highly popular QED Guides service. From this issue the service is temporarily suspended while I sort out a better way of doing things. I apologise if your reply is or has been a little late because we have been literally snowed under with post since we started. Please don't send QED any more queries!

But if there are any questers out there who wouldn't mind replying to people themselves, the whole thing might not die a complete death. I'd like to keep the whole thing up and running, so if you've completed a game and don't mind helping out the odd lost soul then send in your name, address and the adventures you've solved for the QED database. I'll just pass the queries on to you. Might this work? Is there really a helpful brotherhood of adventurers out there? Perhaps you'd like us to put the odd solution onto the coverdisks? If you have any ideas why not drop a line to "The future of QED" and tell me what you think. Cheers.



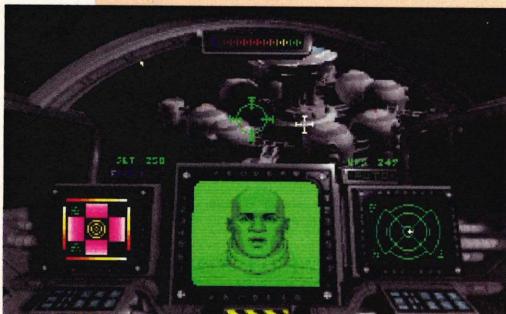
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Privateer

STAR TIP

Sucking vacuum in Privateer? Fed up with trading iron for only a small profit? Well, now privateer extraordinaire, Simon Hathaway, comes to the rescue with a cheat that makes Origin's latest game a lot more fun to play. If you've been playing Privateer, you'll no doubt be aware that new ships cost a lot of money, up to 200,000 credits in some cases. Well, if you're confident hacking and changing the odd bit of game code, here is a way to get 5,000,000 credits, enough money to buy you anything; Centurion starfighter, plasma guns, rear turrets, engine upgrades, the works.

Start the game as usual and select a new game from the option screen. Go to your hand-held computer and save the game. Call it 'Start'. Now exit the game using the key combination Alt-X.



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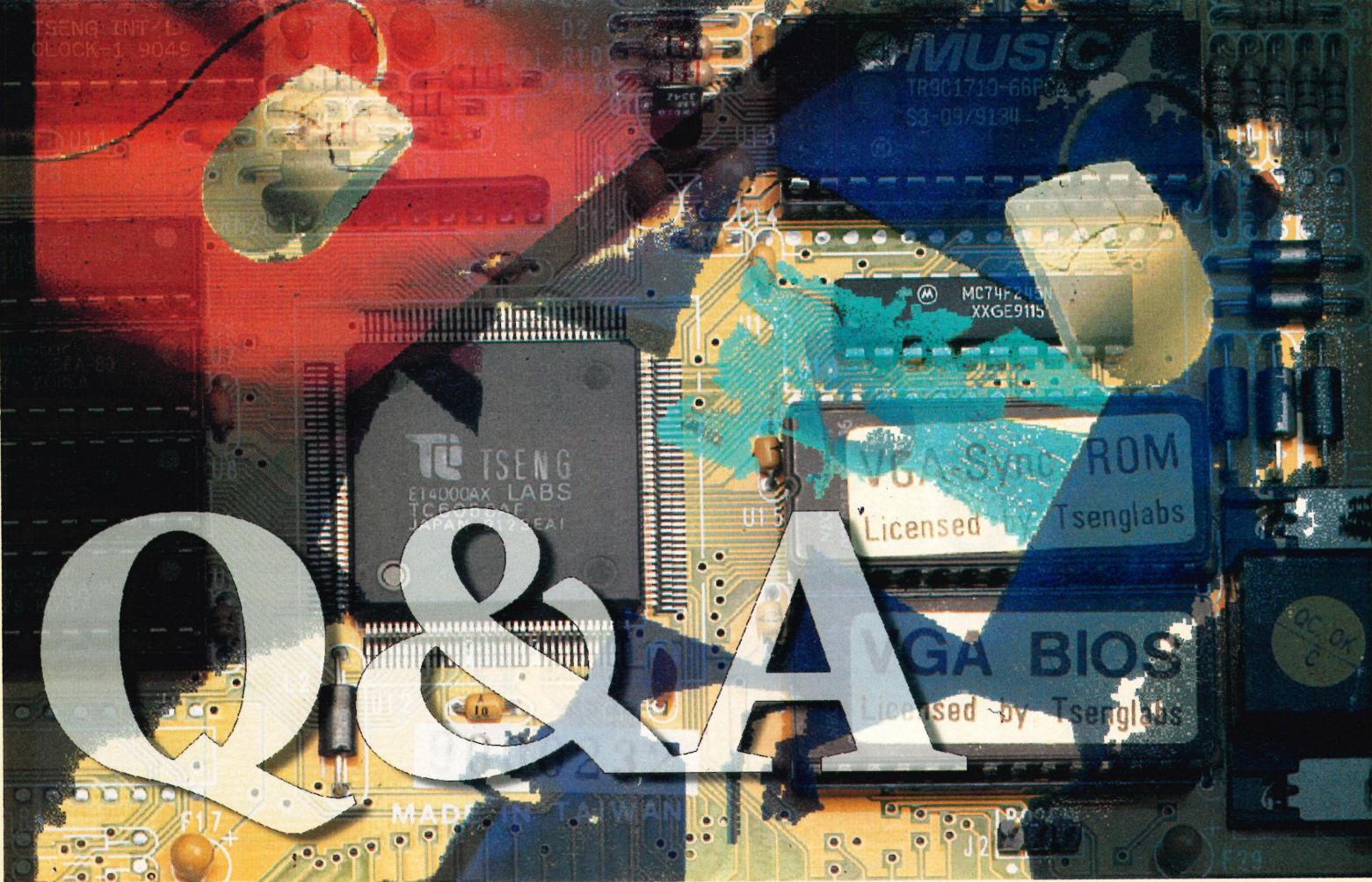


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Bemused, befuddled, or bewildered about your PC? If your hardware gives you headaches and you're stricken with software seize-ups, share your problem with Q&A's Mike James and he'll endeavour to help

Working Windows

QI have an 8086 PC, with VGA 256 graphics, 640K RAM, 5.25" disk drive (360K) and a 21Mb hard disk and am wondering if there are any versions of Windows that will work on my machine. I have flicked through magazines and read all about the program and it sounds great, but all I find is Windows 3.1, which I know won't work on my PC.

Also, please could you recommend a games club that does 5.25" disks. At the moment, I am with Special Reserve, which up till now has been great, but it has just stopped doing the disks. Please help! I am also wondering if Timeworks for DOS will work on my machine. If not, please could you recommend another DTP program that will work.

**Andrew Hollingworth
Norfolk**

AWindows 3.0 used to work with a 8086, but only in real mode. If you can get hold of an old copy then it should work, but you need to be

warned about a number of things. The first is that not all of the video drivers will work on an 8086 because some of them use 286/386 specific instructions.

The second is that in real mode Windows isn't really worth having. It's another of those 'you can do it but it isn't worth the trouble' situations. If you want Windows to multi-task, ie, run more than one program at a time, then I would recommend Quarterdeck's Desqview - but you will also need plenty of expanded memory.

Timeworks for DOS should work OK on your machine - after all it was originally developed specifically for 8086 machines. There is a good range of DTP packages that work on 8086 machine including the top of the range Ventura for DOS, but don't expect too much.

They are all a bit on the slow side when it comes to graphics and you will require plenty of disk space if you need printer and screen fonts. The situation can best be described as workable but not pleasant!

As to games clubs and 5.25" disks,

not being a member of any, I can't comment - this query is best thrown open to other readers. Any recommendations?

We didn't do it - honest!

QUntil recently, I had a perfect 325Mb hard disk, with absolutely no bad sectors whatsoever.

I installed the demo of Prince of Persia 2 from your cover disks on PC Review Issue 21, and tried to play it. After the short opening animation and music, I was informed that the program could not find the file "Nis.dat".

After a quick look, I decided that I could not find it either! The next time I ran it, I received the far more serious message "Data error reading drive C", so I left Norton Disk Doctor searching for any problems with the disk and lo and behold five bad sectors have appeared.

I don't like to blame Prince of Persia 2, but all the sectors have appeared in Prince.exe and .dat files in the

Prince of Persia 2 directory and the message did appear when loading Prince of Persia 2.

I would like to know of any way of reviving the bad areas on the disk, not for the space, it's only $5 \times 8K = 40K$, but because they will get in my way, during file defragmenting, for example, and may slow down disk operations.

Would formatting the whole disk using DOS format fix them, and if not, will a low level format with something like Fdisk? I don't really want to format it at all as I have masses of stuff (300Mb, mostly large artwork) so if there is any other way, do tell.

**Keith Groves
East Sussex**

AThere is no way that a piece of software can cause a bad sector to appear on a disk drive. The reason is that a bad sector is the result of a change in the sector format that ordinary applications software doesn't get a chance to play with. Indeed, the only software that

does modify this area of each sector is a low level format program.

What happens is that the low level format program writes a pattern of track and sector codes to the hard disk that are used from then on to identify each sector.

Application programs simply write to the data portion of each sector. If there is an error in the data portion, you get a data error and in the case of an error anywhere else, you get a sector error of some kind. Applications programs can cause data errors, but sector errors are most often caused by physical damage to the hard disk.

What is most likely to have happened is that the area of the disk used to store Prince of Persia was starting to deteriorate, but this went undetected because it wasn't being used. When you installed the game the unreliability of the sectors became all too apparent!

Although you might well manage to get rid of the bad sectors by reformatting the disk, if there is anything physically wrong with them they will simply go bad again in a short space of time.

My advice is to live with them – they will not make any great difference to defragmentation, or anything else for that matter.

What is more worrying is the possibility that your hard disk may be developing a progressive fault. To monitor the situation, you should keep running Norton and look out for additional bad sectors.

An exceptional error

I have a 386SX 33MHz with 4Mb of RAM. Since I added the last 2Mb, I have been having a problem in that the machine keeps crashing. Having been switched on for a short while, the PC either hangs up or performs a hard reset. Then it counts the memory to a random amount rather than the full 4096.

The only way that I can get round this is by switching it off for a while, which suggests that something is getting too hot.

The question is, what?

The only clue I can find to the solution is when I play Railroad Tycoon. With this game, rather than restarting the machine, it comes up with the message, "EMM386 except-



Menu master

QI have a 386 PC with hard disk, VGA graphics, DOS 4 and Windows version 3. My PC was supplied with DOS 4 and an easy to use system menu, and I have since upgraded to DOS 6 and now have to run from DOS Prompt or Shell. Is it possible, therefore, to get any software that will start me at the same type of menu system as before or similar?

Mr K Luke
Scotland

AThere are so many menuing systems you are spoilt for choice. The problem is that no matter which one you do choose, you will have to spend time learning how to set it up. Many users find that this takes as much time as it saves! HMD IV (disk UM10 Shareware Marketing) is supposed to be easy to use and it has lots of facilities.

Another possibility is Easy Access (disk 2723 from PDSL). Personally, I think that the facilities in MS-DOS 5/6 are good enough to create menus without help. Look up batch files and the use of DOSkey.

I also think that customising the DOSShell program is a good way of building making DOS easier to use. Before going to the trouble of learning a menuing system's way of doing things, have a much closer look at what you already have in DOS 6.

Photo call

QMy hobby, as well as having fun with my PC, is photography. I don't want a database to index my photographs – that's an easy question. What I want are any general utilities extra that might be available concerning photography – depth of field calculators, etc.

Also, are there any tutorial programs on photography? I remember that there used to be one available for the Commodore PET but that was years ago.

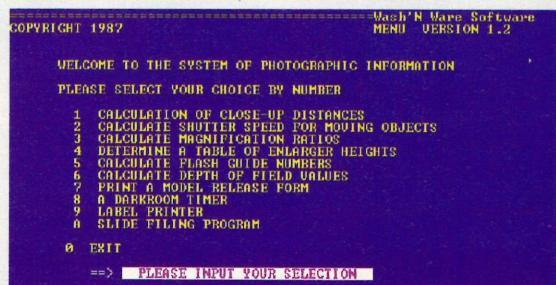
Keith Simpson
Newcastle

AThe Commodore PET is a long time ago, but I think the software you remember was from Kodak. However, I could be wrong. The important point is that the Kodak PC Photographer sounds exactly like the sort of program you are interested in. It costs £39 (available from Shareware Marketing, disk KOD300 (0297) 24088 – although it isn't shareware!) and should work on

almost any machine. It includes a camera simulator, photo album, on-line reference guide and technical database.

Another possibility is PhotoPack – which this time is shareware – disk 1439 from PDSL. This contains a range of useful calculators including depth of field, enlarger adjustments, but, to be honest, the only really useful program in the collection is the darkroom timer. This is a simulation of a multi-step process timer complete with different beeps for each stage. You can set up timings for processes and save and recall them by name.

I have seen a photographic tutorial program about concepts such as exposure and depth of field, but I cannot locate it – can any reader help?



Football management

QWhat I am looking for is a really good football management game. A game that I can really control, so that decisions on team selection, tactics, etc, do actually affect play and the results and are not just number juggling or cosmetic as I have found to be the case with all the games I have tried to date.

Ideally, I want the game to be based on the English League, with a full fixture list of League and Cup matches. If possible, I should like a good graphic presentation similar to the recent Dynamix Front Page Sports Football appears to offer, though I realise this is American football.

I understand that I may be asking for the earth, so I will be pleased if you can suggest a game that offers just some of the features I want.

Ron Weir
Suffolk

AHave you tried Championship Manager 93 from Domark? It seems to be everything you dream of!

More Maths help

QIn reply to the letter from F Hewitt, Norwich regarding GCSE Maths revision, I obtained a piece of shareware from Testware UK Limited (46, The Avenue, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 4QD) called Maths Utils for GCSE. It is very easy to use, accurate and very cheap to register. I can recommend it.

John Bright
Suffolk



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tion error #16 – press Enter to boot". I then press Enter and the same thing happens. Have you any idea what is happening?

Jake Barayev
London

A You are correct in assuming that something is getting hot – my best guess is that it is one of the memory devices that you fitted.

When you first switch your personal computer on, the memory works fine because the devices are cold. As they warm up, they become increasingly speed critical – the colder a piece of electronics is the faster it can operate reliably.

Eventually one of the memory devices reaches a sufficiently high temperature for it to be unable to keep up and the machine crashes. The reason you then get a random memory count is that the machine counts up the amount of memory that is working – so this might give you a clue as to which memory device it is. The EMM386 exception error is just a fancy way of saying that a memory fault has occurred in memory above the first megabyte.

If this behaviour has occurred since you upgraded, it is possible that you have fitted memory devices that are too slow. Check their speed rating against the devices fitted as the first two megabytes. If they are too slow then there isn't much you can do about it except change them.

One possible alternative is to use the BIOS set-up to increase the number of wait states, but this would slow your machine down a little. I can't tell you exactly how to do this because it varies according to the BIOS, and sometimes you can't do it at all!

Three little questions

Q 1) My Sound Blaster card does not recognise any of the joysticks that I have bought. It means using keys or the mouse for games like X-Wing and Zool which were already installed as part of the deal on the PC. When I attempt to calibrate a joystick I get the message, "Push joystick to top left and press fire". I have tried everything, holding centre adjust, and so on, but it doesn't even recognise the fire button.

2) My base memory is very low (563K) which means I can't run a lot of games. I run DOS 6 with DoubleSpace, I know this takes memory but I am told it doesn't take this much. I am fairly new to the PC after an Amiga and don't want to muck about with it. My friend tried and seemed to make it worse.

3) I own a Packard Bell 386SX, Elite 1000 model, but I would now like a 486. When I enquired about a motherboard, I was told I couldn't fit one as it was too big. Does this mean I am stuck with this and have to buy one brand new?

J Fitzpatrick
Glasgow

In the same order:

A 1) The only two reasons that your Sound Blaster joystick port might not be working is that there is another joystick port already fitted or the port is disabled. Have a look for another joystick socket and if you can find one, try that instead. It still might not work, however, because you can only have one joystick port fitted at any one time.

The solution is to disable the Sound Blaster joystick port by removing the little jumper plug – it's at the end of the board away from the joystick connector. The only other possibility is that the joystick port has already been incorrectly disabled by having the jumper removed. If neither possibility proves correct then the Sound Blaster card is broken.

2) Yes, DoubleSpace does take a lot of RAM – about 40K unless you move it into upper memory. The best and simplest way of doing this is to run MemMaker which should automatically optimise your system and increase the amount of free conventional memory.

3) As I don't know the machine in question, it could well be too small to fit a standard replacement motherboard. You could shop around to find a smaller motherboard – they do exist. You need to measure the current motherboard and quote it to everyone you ask.

A slightly different solution would be to buy a motherboard and new case – after all, a new case would only add around £50 to the bill! The case may look as if it is the bulk of your machine but in financial terms it isn't!

Q&A update

The back-up problem

Do you trust your hard disk? Well, you shouldn't. Hard disks are mechanical devices and for most of their life they work hard ... and then wear out. Even if a hard disk doesn't suffer one of those random failures everything is subject to, it will eventually stop working from old age. So why trust your megabytes of valuable data to a time bomb? The answer is probably that to do anything else is either too expensive or too time consuming. However, there are one or two new ideas and it is certainly worth re-examining the options.

The traditional choice for backing up a hard disk is to use a tape drive. As long as you choose the right model, this will make a copy of everything on your hard disk on to a single cassette of tape. It can take as long as an hour or more to make the tape copy, but you don't have to sit around while it happens. A tape drive is a good solution but most users object to the cost — £200 or more — and the fact that the tape drive cannot be used for anything but backing up the hard disk.

Until recently, the only alternative way of backing up a hard disk without a tape drive was to use floppy disks. This isn't a bad way in theory, but in practice it's doomed because of the number of floppy disks needed. If you have a 100Mb hard disk then you need roughly 70 floppy disks to back up the entire contents. You might be able to afford to buy seven boxes of diskettes, but how long could you stand the tedium of feeding them into the disk drive? Most users give up any attempt at backing up on to floppy disks out of boredom!

There are some techniques that you can use to reduce the number of disks needed. The most obvious is to be selective about what you copy. The simplest approach is to copy only data, not programs. After all, you should have the original disks to serve as a back-up. Taking this argument a step further, there is no point in backing up data files that haven't changed since the last time you backed up. This idea results in a procedure called an incremental back-up. You can perform an incremental back-up manually, but it's much easier to use a back-up program. A suitable one is included with MS-DOS 6 or you can buy one of the many that are available. The really difficult part of an incremental back-up is when you have to do the restore after a disk crash. You have to make sure that you copy from the floppy disks in the right order.

The other main way of reducing the number of disks needed for a back-up is to use compression. At best, this only cuts the number of disks needed in half, but it still helps. You can do it the hard way using a compression program like Pkzip or by using a back-up program that supports compression. The final vote in favour of using a special back-up program is that they can often increase the speed of writing to a floppy disk. The one in MS-DOS 6 supports all of these features.

Even when you put all of the advantages together of a floppy disk back-up program — it still isn't much fun. Now we come to the alternatives. The very latest idea is to use a floptical disk. A floptical drive looks like a standard floppy, but it can store 20Mb or so. This reduces the number of diskettes to back up a 100Mb hard disk to around five — or three if you use compression. A floptical drive costs around about the same as a tape drive and has the advantage that you can use it as an extra disk drive as well. If you can manage a higher price tag then a 3.5" 128Mb Magneto Optical (MO) drive at around £600 will back up a 100Mb hard disk on one diskette and works at speeds that make it almost as good as a second hard disk. But, as I said at the beginning, a more convenient solution to the problem remains to be found.

Mike James

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Letters

PC Review welcomes letters on any subject under the PC sun. The editor will chop them to fit if need be, and we'll assume letters are for publication unless you state otherwise. Send your mail to letters, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Star letters win software prizes!

Double trouble

I have a 16MHz 386 PC and use DoubleSpace. Recently, I bought a Sound Blaster card, and have found that many of my games need extra memory for samples, etc.

I tried using a boot disk, but by the time I had installed Emm386 and Himem, the memory had dropped too low again. To get round this, I installed the game on my uncom-pressed Drive D, and then booted up with an old DOS 5 boot disk, thus not loading DoubleSpace.

This presented me with a directory listing of a few DoubleSpace files and my game, which now worked perfectly, Sound Blaster et al.

A word of warning if you should attempt to do this, however. Do not delete any of the DoubleSpace files, as they contain your entire compressed drive.

I hope this helps some readers out of a tight spot.

P S Gardiner
Falmouth, Cornwall

Role reversal

I think your review on Blade of Destiny was a little unfair. I'm new to role-playing and I find the game quite enjoyable, although I agree it could be dull on the scenery side.

Yesterday I was itching for a fight and went to the Ottaskins place in Thorwell and beat four guards, followed by three guards, followed by three more. In about 15 minutes. I'd cast a horriphobus spell on three of them, and an evil eye on a couple which meant two of them were fighting on my side (and I got lucky in my character generation having two archers).

But then again, maybe I am a better fighter than you (and more intelligent and experienced) being a WOMAN!!!

A criticism I would make is that the fight screens are too small, and worse still, some of the enemy are identical to my own team. How, with a strategy based fighting system like this, can you plan a strate-

gy if you can't tell your own side from the enemy. Now if this isn't silly, what is?

PS: I just set up camp for the night by an inviting looking stream, sent my hunter out for food and water, and guess what? Couldn't find water anywhere!

Michelle Vicary
Edgware, Middlesex

Let me first start by saying that, whilst we try to be as fair as possible, reviews are always subjective in that they reflect the opinions of the reviewer. Cal has played a wide range of role-playing games, and felt that Blade of Destiny was not as good as some of the other games on offer. This does not necessarily mean that no-one will get any enjoyment out of the game, just that it could have been a whole lot better.

Incidentally, Cal herself (pictured, right) would like to point out that she is, was and always will be a woman, unless there's something she isn't telling us, of course.



At cross roles?

Cal Jones' article on the problem with RPGs (Issue 24) was an extremely interesting read, and it contained many points that I agreed with and a few that I didn't.

I enjoy computer RPGs immensely and have been involved in a few over the years as manager, tester and manual writer, but the genre is now at a crossroads where it could begin to lose my enthusiasm.

Computer-based RPGs have stagnated in some areas, especially

when it comes to puzzles. There are far too many games that rely on the lever, button and pressure plate philosophy that first came to the fore when Dungeon Master appeared on the Atari ST.

Puzzles should be part of the plot, but these logic puzzles serve no other purpose than to slow the player's progress. More often than not, they feel out of place in the context of the quest or the story, and the 'role-playing' feel is diminished as a result.

The main reason why most people play the 'real' paper-based RPGs is to enhance their character's abilities and thus improve them (hence the 'role-playing' element). Most of the computer RPGs I've played make the quest the be-all and end-all of the game, and this makes them more closely related to the adventure game genre than the paper-based systems they are trying to emulate!

Personally, I have quickly grown tired of the first person perspective in RPGs. Combat is very clumsy and is nothing more than a hit and miss affair, and the same can be said for spell-casting. The isometric view is a much better perspective and it more closely resembles the miniatures and the floor plans of 'real' paper RPGs. It will be most interesting to see what Origin's Ultima VIII does with it. It's a shame that a lot of people equate a good game with its technological achievements to the point where they believe a game is only worth purchasing if it boasts the Ultima Underworld style environment.

Most of what Cal wrote struck a chord, but I didn't agree with the opinion that the Tolkien-inspired fantasy scenarios have become boring and predictable. It's just that most of them have been handled very badly. However, variety is the spice of life and I agree that a change is as good as a rest. Why not publish some science fiction RPGs instead? West End Games' Star War series (based on the films, comics and recent novels) would be ideal. How about it, LucasArts?

Richard Hewison
Luton, Bedfordshire

Not the real thing

In response to your article, The problem with RPGs, of course they are all the same and quite boring. I've

Star letter Golf club

I have just started the MicroProse Users Golfing Society from an idea I had some time ago for players of MicroProse Golf and wondered if any of your readers would be interested in joining.

I have permission from MicroProse to use their name and they have agreed to donate a trophy for the national winner. It is only open at this stage to scratch players so that everybody competes at one level.

Providing I get enough support, I propose to run a regional competition over 36 holes and the final stage over 72 holes.

I am running this on my own at the moment so finances are rather restricted. Any help you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

If you can see your way to printing this letter and ask your readers to send a SAE to me I will send them details of the club and a registration form.

If this venture gets off the ground I will inform you of its progress and credit you at the final stage with any help you care to give. Thank you in anticipation.

Andy Jervis
9, Portland Drive
Nuneaton, Warks

been playing RPGs (the 'proper' ones involving other human beings) for a long time, and I have a bit of a chip on my shoulder with computer games being called RPGs.

The closest thing to a real RPG that a computer can get is multi-user dungeons, something where a human controls each character. But even then you are limited to the functions of the computer. True role-playing is a highly social thing, involving a lot of unhealthy food and drink. A computer RPG involves sitting on your own in a darkened room in front of a screen. Don't get me wrong, I quite enjoy the latter, but it is a different game, not an RPG. Role playing has gathered a greater popularity (and come to think of it, more female gamers), because it has developed beyond hacking your way through dungeons. It doesn't matter if you solve

the puzzle — which you need not do in the one way that the computer will let you — what matters is creating and playing character, and being involved in the group.

Until the computer finds a way to move beyond dungeons and princesses, computer RPGs will be different graphics, same adventure. One is an intellectual puzzle challenge, the other is a social and imagination challenge. I have played RPGs for about ten years, but was stupendously unimpressed with even Ultima Underworld. If the two media were the same, I would be playing Underworld now rather than writing.

Finally, after reading your article on configuring Windows (PC Review, Issue 25), I have found another trick. Are you bored with the really odd wallpaper available on the desktop? I, for one, cannot

look at Leaves with a hangover. However, you can find a picture that you do like and scan it, saving it as a .BMP file. If you place this file in your Windows directory, it will then be available on the desktop (along with all the other wallpapers).

Andrew Peregrine
Maldon, Essex

Let off with a caution

After buying Twilight 2000 a year ago, I considered buying the extra sound and graphics package from Paragon Software to enhance the already great factors of the game.

I find it thoroughly captivating and thought that the extra graphics would really make the game superb. I went to try and get an international order from the bank for \$9.95 and after finding a place that sold them, I phoned America to check the price of the upgrade. To my great annoyance, I found that the company was no longer in business and it was just 'pot luck' that I had not sent off the money order.

I will now be more cautious in the future of getting upgrades and I feel that magazines such as PC Review should inform readers of companies that have either ceased to trade or have been taken over.

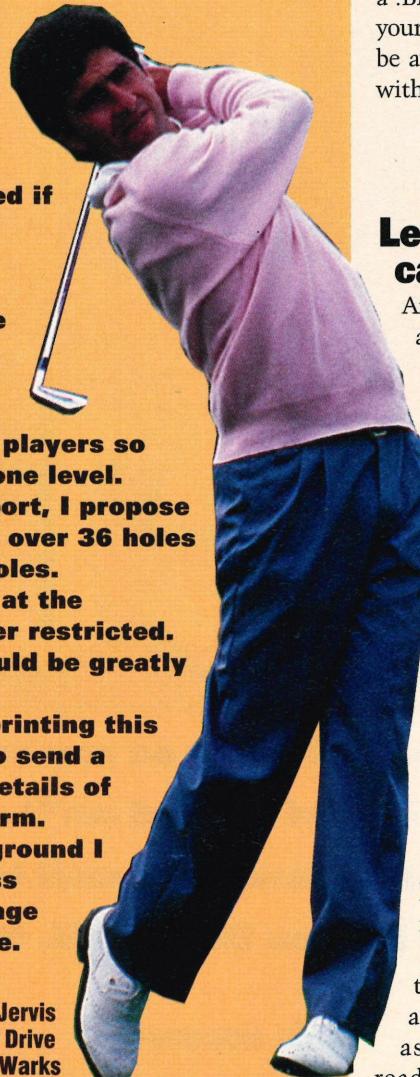
James Allen
Dorchester, Dorset

Twilight 2000 and the sound and graphics extras are currently available from Empire, on (081) 343 7337. Paragon, incidentally, hasn't gone out of business — it was acquired by MicroProse last year and now operates as a development team for the company.

A world of its own

One of the most recent and exciting innovations in computer gaming is the ability to play PC games with and against other people who are located in different areas via a modem link.

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The Transworld BBS Challenge ladder is a special interest forum that brings flight sim enthusiasts together from around the country to discuss and fly PC combat simulations that are capable of using telecommunications technology for play and competition.

At the moment, this is limited to those sims which support a direct modem to modem connection.

So, if you enjoy simulated aerial combat, and you think that you could waste just about anyone in computer airspace, join the Transworld flight sim ladder.

A challenge ladder is a list of players engaged in an ongoing competition. The players are arranged vertically, with the highly ranked players near the top of the "ladder" and new or unranked players joining in at the bottom. As they issue and win challenges, played out via direct modem to modem connection, their position on the ladder moves upwards as they strive to achieve the coveted top spot.

Top Gun Tournaments will be organised from time to time, and there will also be a monthly newsletter informing you of ladder progress, with member editorials, and other news items.

Interested? Good! The sooner we can build a solid membership, the sooner we can put together the tools for a well sponsored, solid ladder.

This is not a profit motivated venture and there are therefore no fees or charges associated with the ladder. If you like computer piloting, contact us on Transworld BBS. Leave a message for Leon Smith.

Telephone Transworld BBS on one of the three data lines and download Ladder.zip on (0272) 739268, 739269, or 739270 for official rules, regulations, and important information. For further information, please contact me at 3 Seymour Rd, Staple Hills, Bristol BS16 4TG.

**Leon Smith
Bristol**

Multiple solutions wanted

I was interested in the preview of Simon the Sorcerer (PC Review, Issue 22). Despite the naff name, it instantly appealed to me when I read that it avoided the old A to B to C syndrome (ie, using A with B to get C). This is obviously welcome news to veteran graphic adventurers everywhere, who are fed up with games which rely on using only one solution to a problem. Why do some well-established companies (Sierra in particular) insist on feeding us with over-expensive games with such restrictive methods of gameplay? In such games, the player is confronted with puzzles where the program stubbornly tells you that there is only one way to get past the obstacle in front of you and you soon find that any sensible alternative is met with sudden death!

Some of the problem-solving methods are a bit obscure, too. The player, after a solid six hours of infuriated re-loads, says something like, "Gosh, silly me! I should have realised that the dead rainbow trout I'm carrying would have opened that locked door, rather than the three keys and two battering rams in my inventory!"

OK, that's an exaggeration, but you get my point. It's an incredibly annoying problem, which can only be solved by continuous experimentation with the players' inventory — a somewhat dreary task for someone who just shelled out £45-plus for some fun.

It's good to see that some companies do address the above problems. LucasArts is a good example. One of the reasons that Monkey Island 2, for instance, is so enjoyable (along with the humour) is that it gives you the freedom to move around three different islands, tackling the puzzles at your own pace. If you get stuck, you don't have to spend hours trying to get past one sticky obstacle. The solutions aren't too far-fetched either and you can sometimes tackle a problem in a different way — all without sudden death. About the same can be said of the more recent Day of the Tentacle: if you can't get Hoagie's Chron-o-John working, you can still try to see to some of Laverne or Bernard's dilemmas.

Another promising software house would have to be Revolution Software. Lure of the Temptress, although too short and too easy, showed what brilliant potential its Virtual Theatre system has, making all the characters go out and lead their own lives while you go about yours. I'm sure many of us are looking forward to Beneath a Steel Sky. Imagine combining all the above plus-points I have mentioned with VT and decent intro and end sequences — you could have the game of the century!

**Gordon Wallace
Ayr**

Replacement costs

"Why do games cost so much?" is an old question. I have another one for you: why do replacements cost so much?

We are often advised to make copies of the original installation disks, although I don't suppose many of us do, since using decent quality disks, this could add £6-£8 to an already expensive purchase.

A year ago I bought Ultima VII, which has been installed on to my hard disk on several occasions. I only have 40Mb, so something has to go when I get something new.

I recently tried, yet again, to install it and found that the first install disk was now unreadable. So I sent it back for replacement and received a reply from Electronic Arts:

"We are pleased to inform you that

replacements are available. The price is £5.75 per disk to cover material costs and handling..."

Many games now come on six to eight disks. To replace all the disks in a game at these prices would cost £34.50 to £46, which is, obviously, more than they sell the complete game, including packaging, for to their distributors.

**Simon Booth
Manchester**

Dreamy disk demos

I noticed in your magazine that companies are now offering free disks to sample certain games. This has raised an interesting point. Why don't most people offer this with new games as it would certainly help us computer owners to see if we can run such software at a reasonable pace. I mention this because on reading a review of Alone in the Dark, I was informed that on anything less than a 33MHz 486 it would be too slow, but on running a demo on my humble 25MHz 386 it seemed to add an almost dreamlike quality to the game and so I bought it.

I was also thinking that if some companies weren't too keen on the idea of freebies, perhaps they could use the old paint advertising gimmick of selling the disk for, say, £2-£3, which would be redeemable against the full game.

**Mr I F Perry
Rothwell
Northants**

Competition winners Sound Sense (Issue 23)

Beatmark's CD-ROM plus soundboard upgrade package evidently hit many people's wish lists, since this proved to be a hugely popular competition with thousands of entries. Sadly, there could only be one winner, although P Nicholson, of Romsey, Hampshire, won't be too upset, being the proud new owner of the Sound Sense Multimedia Kit.

Also laughing all the way to the keyboard are J Taggart, of Kilwinning, Ayrshire; Alasdair T McClean, of Perth, and Clive Beal, of Horam, East Sussex, who have each won a Sound Sense Entertainment Pack. Happy listening!

The answers to the three set questions were, 1) Julie Andrews (Christopher Plummer was also accepted), 2) decibels, and 3) three games in the Sound Sense Entertainment Pack.

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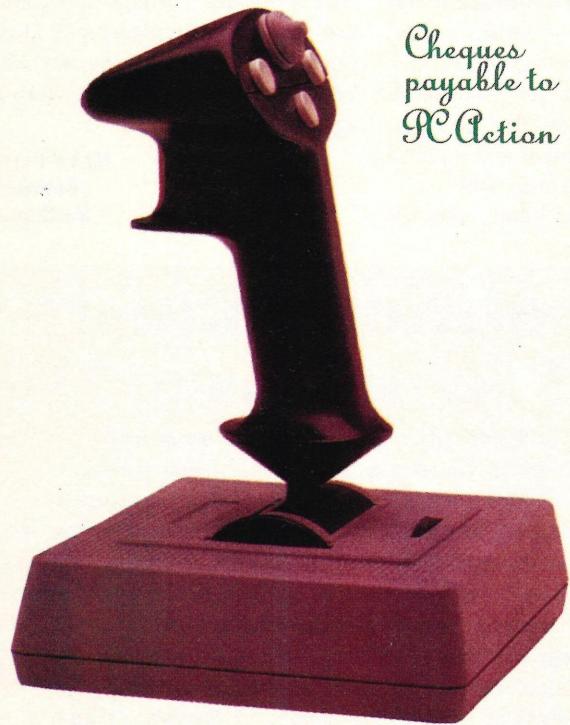
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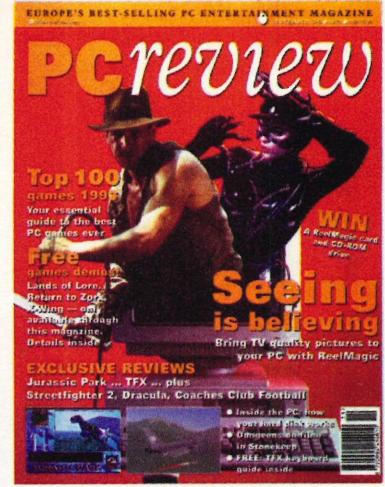
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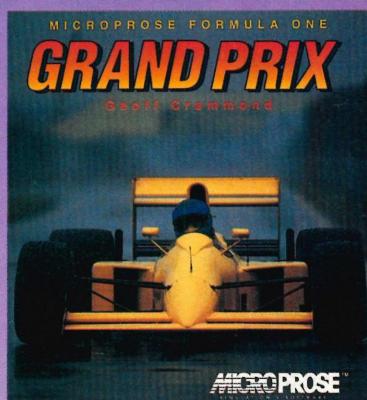
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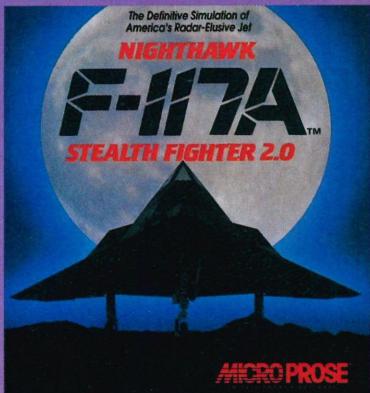


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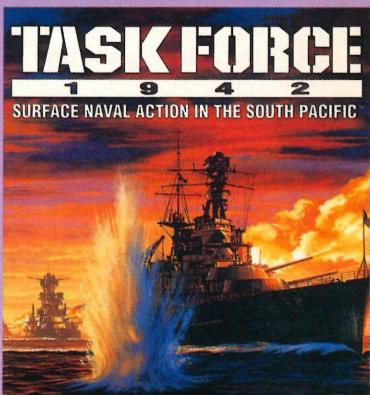
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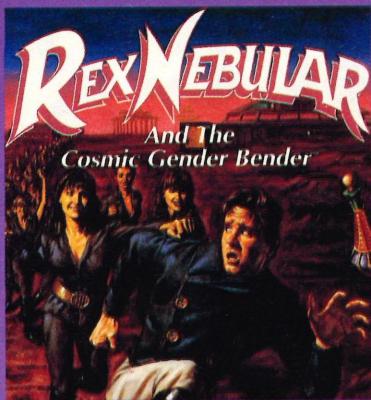
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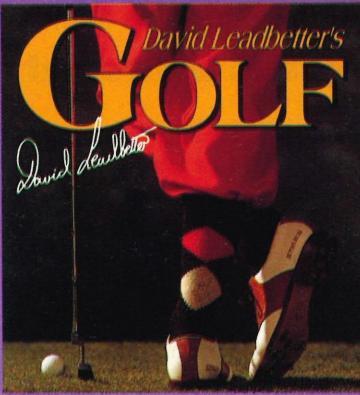


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BUYERS GUIDE

Classic space games

Space is now a fairly cluttered frontier, with a multitude of games offering space combat, trading and alien encounters. But which do you choose?

Dean Evans dutifully grabs his towel and hitches a lift across the universe

Space: the final frontier... it seems that this famous phrase has fired and captured our imaginations for generations. Although it hasn't encouraged people to wear short, bell-bottom trousers, thanks to Star Trek there are now nations of people who know about Tricorders, warp drives and teleportation; people who are perfectly comfortable with the idea of savagely angular haircuts, strange new worlds and pointy alien ears.

The point is simply this: science fiction and, more importantly, space, sells.

Space and sci-fi have been hugely popular ever since the pulp comics of the late 1920s where titles like Astounding SF and Amazing regularly spun tales of daring adventure and stories of alien invasions to an eager cult readership.

With the advent of the home computer age, these tales of alien invasion were cut, simplified and transferred to the coin-op and monitor screen to become arcade shoot 'em up games like Space Invaders, Galaxians, Defender and Star Raiders on the Atari VCS.

Ever since Star Wars and 2001, the idea of outer space has been enormously popular and games set in outer space have been equally pop-

ular as a result. Unlike a film, for example, a space game on a computer 'involves' the player and unlike a flight sim, the space game (or space sim) isn't obliged to give even the smallest nod of recognition to realism.

Like sci-fi books, games such as Wing Commander and X-Wing offer escapism and a flight sim type experience that ignores the restrictions imposed by earth-bound reality such as G-Forces, wave drag and the ground.

In space, you can easily move in three dimensions and since there's no gravity, you can quickly speed up, slow down and hover without running the risk of breaking any fundamental physical laws whatsoever. It's generally fast, fun and you don't need a 200-page flight manual to get it up and playing.

But like the world builder and the RPG, the space genre is a relative newcomer to the PC computer market. Two dimensional space shoot 'em ups (who can forget good old Space Invaders?) did solid business for years, but continually failed to do anything strikingly new or original. But, and this is a huge, bold sort of 'but', everything radically changed with the arrival of David Braben and Elite on the BBC Micro.

Elite introduced and popularised the 3D aspect of the space game, investing it with a new fictional realism. As such, 3D combat games became big business overnight and, despite competition from almost every corner, Elite fought off all imitators and hopeful bandwagon jumpers. Simply put, Elite was *the* space game to have on your PC.

But times change and Wing Commander appeared in 1991 revolutionising the stumbling 3D space genre once again. Using scalable bitmaps, Gouraud shading and cinematic sequences, Wing Commander brought a whole new visual realism to the genre. Although with the benefit of hindsight, it is really nothing more than a good-looking 3D shoot 'em up, with its strikingly new graphics and ongoing narrative Wing Commander was a mould breaker.

Unfortunately, after the high profile Wing Commander, the genre descended into a rut with a batch of disappointing games that included Mantis XF5700 Experimental Fighter, Lightspeed, Epic – even Wing Commander 2 failed to improve on the original.

On the plus side, X-Wing from LucasArts saw a long-awaited return to the Star Wars universe.

Trading, big guns and fast 3D



Elite Plus. When Elite originally appeared on the BBC Micro, it boasted revolutionary 3D wireframe graphics, trading, thousands of planets, seven galaxies, police, pirates and even a few missions. All this was somehow squashed into a tiny, minute 32K (5% of your PC's 640K base memory) on the BBC Micro, and on PC, although the visuals had been completely revamped, the gameplay has remained exactly the same.



The Wing Commander series of games are without doubt the most popular titles on the market. The original game combined dogfighting action with highly realistic graphics and has so far spawned WC2, two add-on disks, Wing Commander Academy and Privateer. Its distinctive style (cinematic sequences, bitmaps, etc) is unmatched, although the actual gameplay is a tad simplistic by today's standards.



Although less handsome than Wing Commander, X-Wing has taken the genre by storm. High on atmosphere (it has three Star Wars films to draw upon) X-Wing scores over its rivals thanks to superb playability. Flying an X-Wing, Y-Wing and A-Wing against the Empire, LucasArts has recreated the excitement of the movie, enabling you to fight your way to the Death Star and fly down that famous trench.

Glossary

Despite its basic and often crude polygonal graphics, it offered superb gameplay and familiar atmosphere, so that X-Wing was, and indeed still is, the space combat sim to beat.

Also worthy of a mention is Interplay's Star Trek 25th Anniversary, a graphic adventure that brilliantly captures the mood of the TV series. Switching between Kirk, Bones, Spock, Scotty, et al, you must solve seven episodes, using any Star Trek knowledge you've picked up over the years. Finally, there is Star Control, a game that proves that the old 2D format is far from dead.

So what of the future? Well, I'm increasingly of the opinion that in the space genre the focus is on developing evermore sophisticated graphics while failing to improve the gameplay. Privateer (reviewed on page 74) is a prime example. Here is a game that looks great from the screenshots on the pack, but frankly there isn't much of a game underneath.

Nonetheless, after Wing Commander, X-Wing and Frontier: Elite 2, the future of the genre actually looks reasonably rosy. The forthcoming Starlord from MicroProse (reviewed next issue) promises to combine both a complex strategic challenge and fast three dimensional combat action. TIE Fighter and Rebel Assault from LucasArts will continue to milk the Star Wars licence, DID is to follow up TFX with its eagerly awaited space game, Inferno, and Spectrum Holobyte is going to leap into the fray with Star Trek: The Next Generation on CD-ROM.

Hopefully, we will see games in space get even bigger in the future with both graphics and gameplay improving to include Super VGA, padlock views, variable plot lines, better AI and digitised video footage. Remember, if the space game makes as much progress as the flight simulation has in the past year, the final frontier will become very exciting indeed.



And the future? Well, ideally a game should have a huge playing area, Gouraud shading, texture-mapping, fast 3D polygons, external views, planets to fly across and of course frantic, fast gameplay coming out of its ears. It looks as if Inferno from DID might just have all these things and more, and if it's half as good as TFX is, then I think it's going to be something really special indeed.

Aliens

Space would be pretty dull without the odd pushy, militaristic alien race hell-bent on destroying humanity. Whether it's the Kilrathi, the Empire or that old foe, the Klingons, they're all after the space gamer's head.

Credits

The credit (a term originating in sci-fi literature) is the accepted form of galactic currency throughout most space trading games.

Cinematic sequences (cutscenes)

These Wing Commander sequences showed men running to their ships, landing and launch sequences and enabled you to chat casually to other pilots in the bar.

Deflection shooting

Space combat is often akin to World War II air combat and tactics such as deflection shooting (aiming slightly in front of your target) work equally well.

ECM

Electronic Counter Measures. When there is a missile flying around in space, switching on your trusty ECM will either destroy it or divert it away from your ship.

Hyperspace

Travelling the huge distances between stars is achieved by using Hyperspace. When a starship exceeds the speed of light, it rips open a hole in natural space, enters Hyperspace (a place where time and distance are ignored) and then rips open another hole to get to its destination. There are numerous sci-fi variations on this method: hyperspatial corridors, light speed travel, space bending, warp drives, and so on.

Jumps

See Hyperspace.

Lightspeed

Velocity attained when a starship equals the speed of light photons.

Light year

The distances between stars are measured in light years, ie, the distance light travels in a year. For example, Earth's nearest star (bar our own sun) is Alpha Centauri which is four light years away. If a ship travelled at the speed of light it would take approximately four years to get there.

Missiles

As in modern air combat, the missile is a highly effective offensive weapon and fictional armories may include nuclear weapons, fire-and-forget missiles, infra-red heatseekers and proton torpedoes.

Tractor beam

A futuristic grappling hook. The tractor beam is a ray of light (normally green, don't ask me why) that used to capture cargo canisters, ejected pilots and even other starships.

Scalable bitmaps

Used principally in Wing Commander, the bitmap affords the programmer a higher degree of detail. A scalable bitmap can be smoothly enlarged or reduced to give the impression of depth and 3D movement.

Shields

Shields are energy barriers that starships raise to counter laser fire. Most ships have four; front, back, left and right.

Space Invaders

The game that started it all. Using your mobile cannon, you can move left and right to stop ranks of alien invaders reaching the bottom of the screen. Simple but addictive.

Space sim

A serious space game; a game that intends to be as realistic as a fictional game can.

Trading

Elite began the trend for space trading, starting you off with a basic ship which you had to equip with bigger and better weapons using the profits from your trading ventures. Now this trading element is practically everywhere, despite the fact that it is really only a blatant longevity booster for any game.

Weapons

As the laser is the main weapon, space games have a combat quality akin to World War Two flight sims like Aces over the Pacific. Other notable guns are: the mass driver cannon, ion cannon, particle accelerator, phaser and the big plasma gun.

Wing people

In space games, you usually go up against incredible odds all by yourself. In Wing Commander and X-Wing, however, you can fly with a wingman that you can order to attack, patrol or help you save your own skin.

BUYERS GUIDE

Classic space games



Elite Plus



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Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space



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With a sparsely equipped cobra spaceship, you must trade your way from 'harmless' to 'elite'. In a fully working universe, indulge in piracy, mining and bounty hunting across seven galaxies, the choice is yours. Elite Plus was the best space game around for years.

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Frontier: Elite II

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As the grandson of the original Elite pilot, you must again make a fortune in anyway you see fit. Five years in the making, Frontier is bigger, better, features more ships, missions, more everything, in fact. With its Gouraud shaded graphics, Frontier is destined to be a classic.

Gametek

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Hyperspeed

Disk £44.99

Hyperspeed aimed to be MicroProse's answer to Elite. However, the combat is a little tough to get to grips with and there isn't the overwhelming feeling of freedom that you get with Elite.

MicroProse

(0454) 326532

7

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space has no 3D combat sequences, no trading, no mining and there isn't the slightest trace of a gun anywhere. You take control of either the Russian or the American space programme and must balance budgets and invest in new technology to beat the other side in the space race.

EA/Interplay

(0753) 549442

6

Star Trek 25th Anniversary

EA/Interplay

(0753) 549442

7

Disk £39.99

Seven missions, the USS Enterprise, Scotty, Bones, Kirk, Spock and the gang are all here in this brilliant graphic adventure from Interplay. Drawing heavily on the look and feel of the cult TV series, Star Trek 25th Anniversary forces you to use your Star Trek knowledge to win battles against the Klingons and save the day.

Empire

(081) 343 7337

-

Wing Commander

(Space Legends) Disk £34.99

The original, and for my money still the best, of the Wing Commander series enrols you as a hotshot Terran pilot on the TCS Tigers Claw battleship. With influences such as Star Wars and Battlestar Galactica, Wing Commander is a shoot 'em up par excellence. To the tune of a superb stereo soundtrack, you fight the Kilrathi and win the war in glorious texture-mapped 3D.

EA

(0753) 549442

7

Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego

Disk £39.99

Space travel needn't involve guns. This time you're a galactic detective, tracking down the notorious Carmen Sandiego and her band of evil villains who have been stealing galactic landmarks. Follow the clues from Saturn to Halley's Comet, learning about the planets as you go. Classic edutainment for the children.

US Gold

(021) 625 3366

8

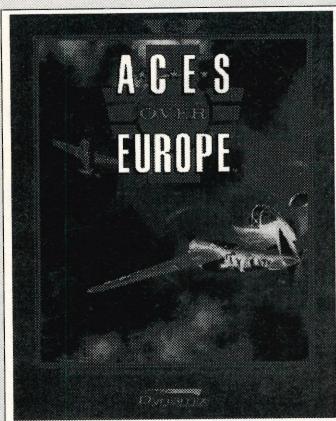
X-Wing

Disk £45.99

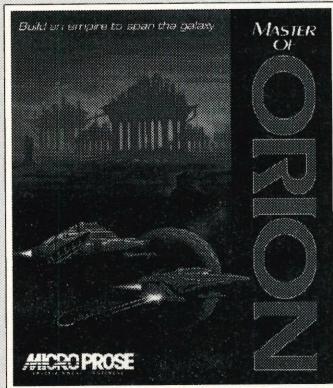
Probably the most atmospheric space game around. Fly three tours of duty in the Star Wars universe, protect transports, attack star destroyers and fly the famous Death Star trench scene. Difficult, fun and superb.

Prices quoted are recommended retail prices; you may find the older products discounted in the shops.

No.1 for PC Games



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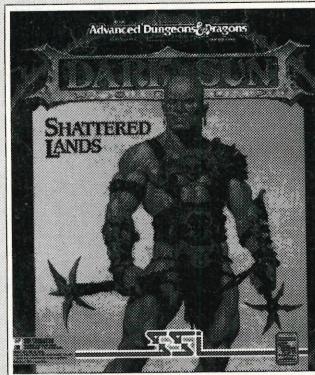
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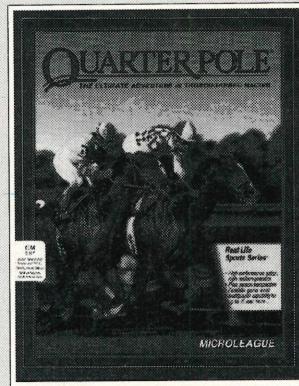
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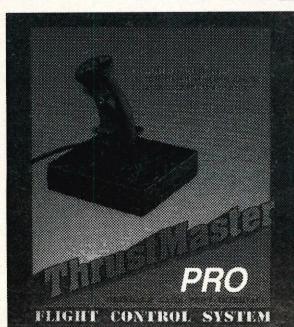
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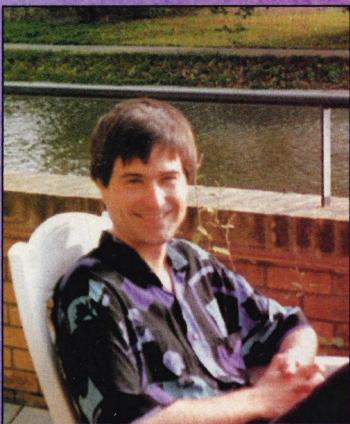
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CLASSIC GAME

David Braben's *Classic game of the month*



Populous



"I enjoyed Populous because it was so different to all the other games around at the time — it was

like playing a new game rather than a variation of a previous game. It was delightfully simple, yet great fun to play — you could play it without having to plough through any manuals."

Many grand claims have been made for Populous over the years: that it was responsible for pioneering a brand new gaming genre, the 'God sim', or world builder; that it is the game converted to the most computer and console formats, and an enduring international best seller. Fortunately, for the hype merchants and the designer, Bullfrog Productions, the claims are true.

Both Populous's presentation and play were highly novel. The game took place on a raised square, set diagonally on screen with the player viewing the action as a low-flying bird to one side. This isometric viewpoint quickly spawned a rush of similar-looking games: Mega-lo-Mania, Utopia, Bullfrog's own Powermonger ...

Rather than controlling your characters on-screen directly, in Populous, you manipulate their environment to help the communities thrive. You have the power to change the weather, the terrain, and even strike your people with disaster — your very own 'acts of God'. The current sequel, Populous II, offers a larger playing area and more game features.

PROFILE

David Braben shot to prominence back in 1984, when he and Ian Bell together created Elite, a space trading and strategy game which ran on the BBC B micro and was way, way ahead of its time. Alongside the Pacmans and Defender clones, Elite's wire-frame graphics and depth of gameplay were outstanding. Many BBC Bs were sold in order to play Elite and the game was also a massive hit on other formats, even the belated Elite Plus on the PC.

Braben celebrated this success by writing the first Acorn Archimedes game, Zarch, and settling down to concoct the sequel to Elite. That was eight years ago. Frontier: Elite II has been 'nearly there' for close on a year now, suffering contractual difficulties with publishers, but finally sees the light of day this month.

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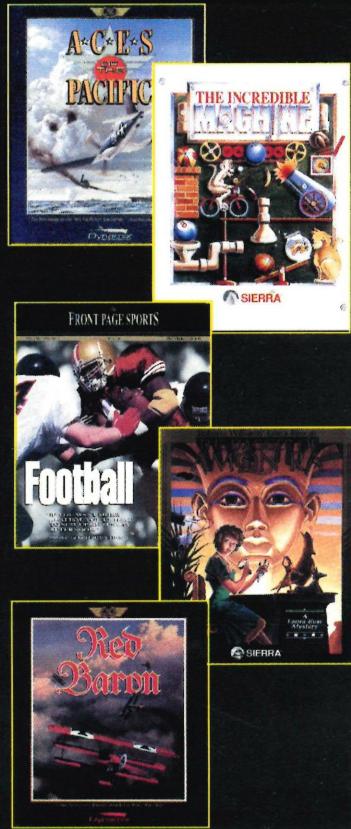
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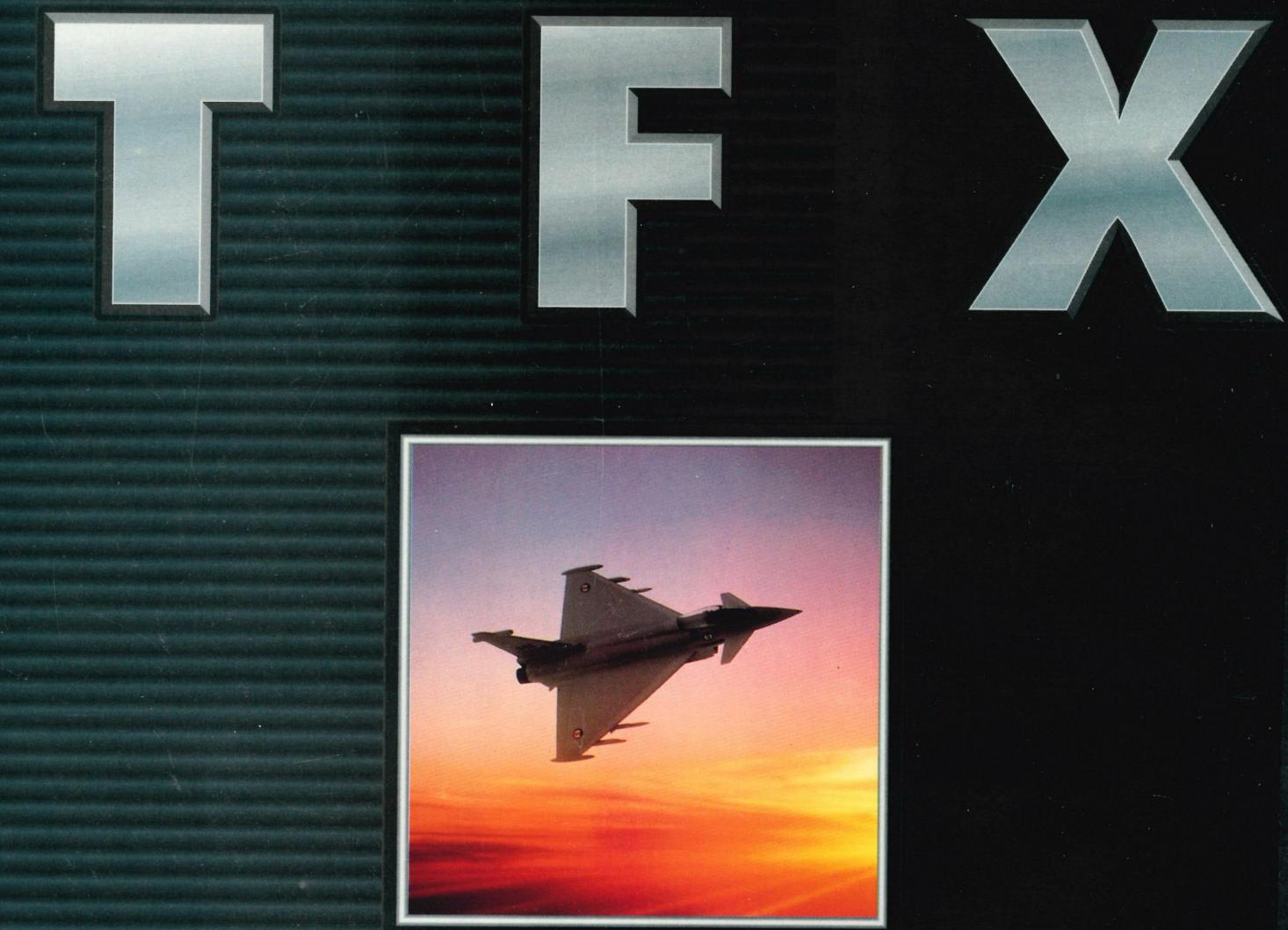
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